the weekly standard

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HUME VS. ROUSSEAU
GERTRUDE HIMMELFARB

Tough Times in EUtopia

BY ANDREW STUTTAFORD

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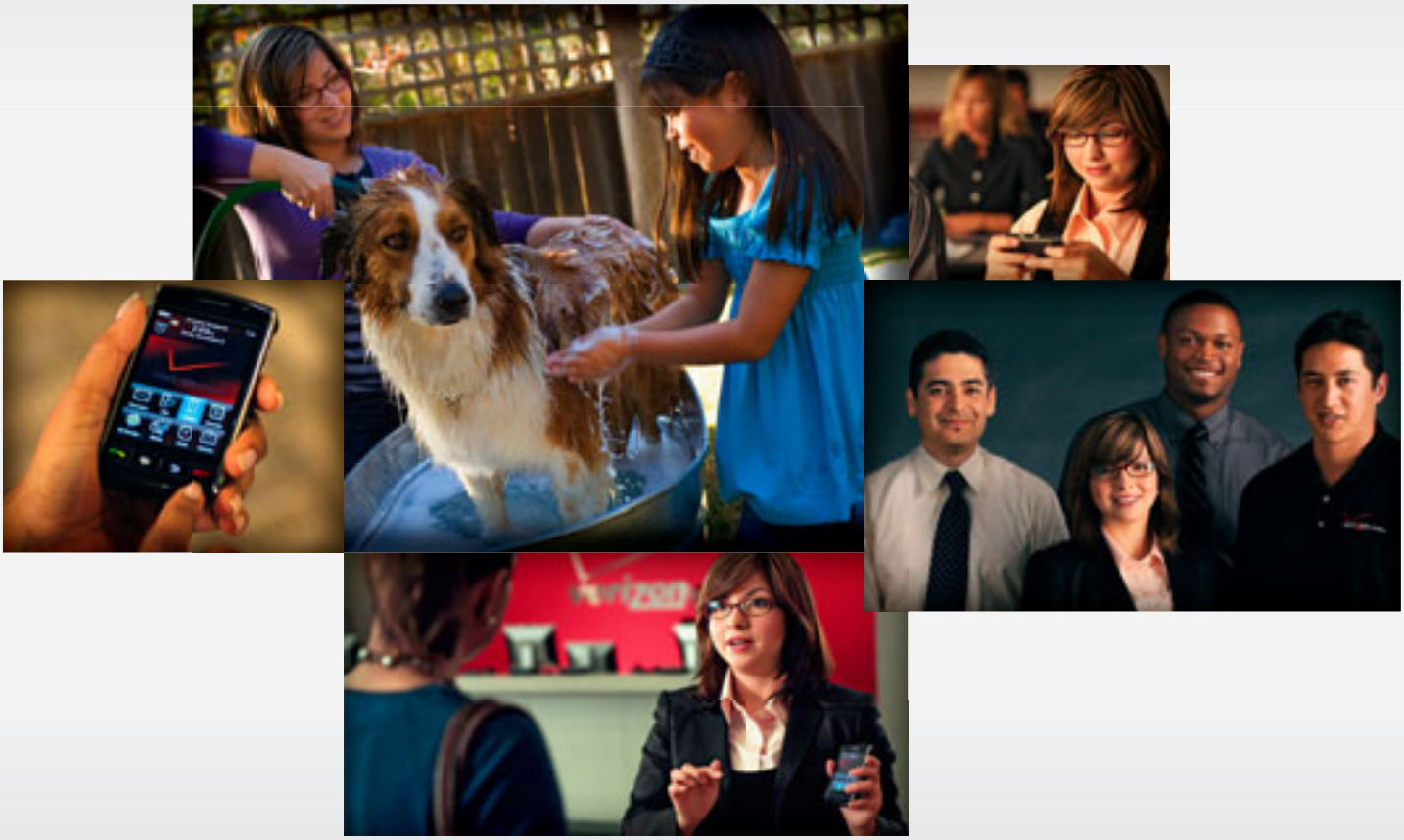
Teamwork can bring a lot of satisfaction to a job. Whichever side of it you're on.



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Reduced government revenue

Fewer jobs

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THE *people* OF AMERICA'S OIL AND NATURAL GAS INDUSTRY

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Source: Nielsen Media Research, FNC vs. CNN, MSNBC, CNBC & HLN, M-F 7-8p program name averages, Live+SD P2+ & A25-54 AA(000), February 2009. Subject to qualifications to be made available upon request

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BPA INTERNATIONAL

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The Jerk

Is it just The Scrapbook, or is the new president turning out to be a bit of a jerk? Exhibit A: Obama's failed joke on the *Tonight* show about his bowling ineptness (he's up to 129!) being comparable to what a disabled athlete would manage. "It's like—it was like Special Olympics, or something," Obama told Jay Leno. Yes, he apologized before the taped show even made it on the air. But for a striking contrast in tone, you should search on YouTube for the video of Sarah Palin warmly and cheerfully addressing the participants in this year's Special Olympics, all the while dandling disabled son Trig in her lap.

In what we can only hope is a sign of things to come, the press for once didn't roll over on its collective back to have its stomach rubbed by its hero and master. An enterprising AP reporter tracked down the Special Olympics bowling champ, who will clearly smoke the First Bowler once he scores the inevitable invitation to the White House:

> The top bowler for the Special Olympics looks forward to meeting President Barack Obama in an alley. "He bowled a 129. I bowl a 300. I could beat that score easily," Michigan's Kolan McConiughey . . . told The Associated Press in an interview Friday. . . . McConiughey, who is mentally disabled . . . [has] bowled five perfect games since 2005. The 35-year-old McConiughey has been bowling since he was 8 or 9. His advice for Obama? Practice every day.

The British press, meanwhile, continues to make hay out of Exhibit B: Obama's gift to Prime Minister Gordon Brown of a cheesy set of DVDs containing 25 American movies. No. 10 Downing Street has not been shy about leaking details of the embarrassing contrast in thoughtfulness between the PM's gift to Obama and what he got in return. Brown might as well have come home to London wearing a T-shirt: "I went on a visit to Washington to see our oldest and most important ally, and all I got was this lousy set of DVDs."

To review: When Brown lunched with Obama at the White House on March 3, he brought with him as a token of esteem for the president a pen holder carved from the wood of the HMS *Gannet*, one of the British ships that helped stamp out the slave trade in the 19th century. There was an echo in this of a more famous gift: that of Queen Victoria to President Rutherford B. Hayes of a desk, made from the timbers of the HMS *Resolute*, a vessel of the British Royal Navy that had been rescued from Arctic ice by an American whaler. The *Resolute* desk, with the exception of a couple of presidents, has held pride of place in the Oval Office ever since (it's the one featured in the famous photo of John-John Kennedy playing at his father's feet), and Obama sits behind it today.

Brown also brought along a first-edition of Martin Gilbert's seven-volume biography of Winston Churchill, as well as thoughtful gifts for the Obama daughters. In return, there were toy models of the presidential helicopter for Brown's two boys, and the aforementioned DVDs.

Meanwhile, when a reporter for the *Telegraph* asked why there was no formal dinner, as befits a visit from the British prime minister, a spokesman for the Obama State Department—you remember them, sophisticated, cultured, ready to repair the damage to our alliances supposedly caused by the cowboy from Texas?—replied: "There's nothing special about Britain. You're just the same as the other 190 countries in the world. You shouldn't expect special treatment."

Indeed. But how about minimally decent treatment? Brown, not known to be a film buff (for one thing, his eyesight is failing), finally sat down last week to have a look at the notorious DVDs. According to the *Telegraph*'s Tim Walker, there was a problem. "The films only worked in DVD players made in North America and the words 'wrong region' came up on his screen."

Walker added: "When Obama's unlikely gift was disclosed, a reader emailed me to ask if *Clueless* was among the films. Funnily enough, it was not." ♦

Teleprompter-in-Chief

The best new humor site of the Obama era bills itself "Barack Obama's Teleprompter's Blog: Reflections from the Hard Drive of the Machine that Enables the Voice of the Leader of the Free World" (barackstelepromptер.blogspot.com).

Obama's teleprompter, aka TOTUS, filed a dispatch from L.A. after the Special Olympics gaffe:

> Okay, I see the bus coming right at me, so let's be clear: this was *His* ad lib. . . .
>
> It's days like this that make me miss the days when He and I would walk the streets of Chicago, doing community activism. Sure, it took Him 30 minutes to set me up, and sometimes he couldn't get the extension cord to reach an electrical outlet, or the folks he wanted to talk to would walk off because they had better things to do, or the glare off my screen made his remarks unreadable. But it was a simpler time, when he could stay on script and didn't feel the need to "speak his mind," and we were a team. All I know, is it's going to be a long flight home. ♦

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Obama's Bracket

Now that the fundamentals of the American economy are strong, or sound, or whatever, President Obama was able to make time last week for an interview with ESPN's Andy Katz to talk about his picks for the NCAA basketball tournament. For his part, Katz came away gushing about the president's level of knowledge, writing afterward that Obama was "as educated and knowledgeable" as any professional basketball analyst.

Obama went on camera with Katz in the Map Room, where he worked out his picks on a whiteboard and, unlike most politicians, who view these types of exercises as opportunities to pander, Obama seemed to have put some thought into his bracket. He picked VCU over UCLA in a big first-round upset (because he believes the PAC 10 is having a down year). In picking Pittsburgh over Duke in the Elite 8, Obama noted that despite Duke's "skilled perimeter players, they just don't have the muscle inside. I think [Pitt's DeJuan] Blair is going to eat them up." In picking Syracuse over Oklahoma, a late-round upset, Obama explained, "The problem with Oklahoma, they have the player of the year [Blake Griffin], but they play, like, seven guys. I think you start getting worn down."

For his Final Four, Obama picked UNC, Louisville, Pittsburgh, and Memphis, with North Carolina as his projected winner. At the end of the interview with Katz, Obama turned to the camera to address the UNC players directly: "Now, for the Tar Heels who are watching, I picked you all last year—you let me down. This year, don't embarrass me in front of the nation, all right?"

The president's priorities never change. ♦

Just a Rounding Error These Days

'An article on Wednesday about the impact of the recession on country clubs misquoted Joe Beditz, the president and chief executive of the National Golf Foundation, who said the sport was doing relatively well. He described golf as 'a $40 billion industry,' not '$400 billion'" (correction in the *New York Times*, March 20). ♦

Sentences We Didn't Finish

'When I withdrew from consideration to be secretary of health and human services, some pundits said health reform had received a devastating blow. While it would be flattering for me to believe that, it would also be completely wrong. Those pundits were wrong because of the great team that President Obama has assembled. . . . " ("Health Reform's Moment," by Thomas A. Daschle, *Washington Post*, March 20). ♦

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Casual

Squashed

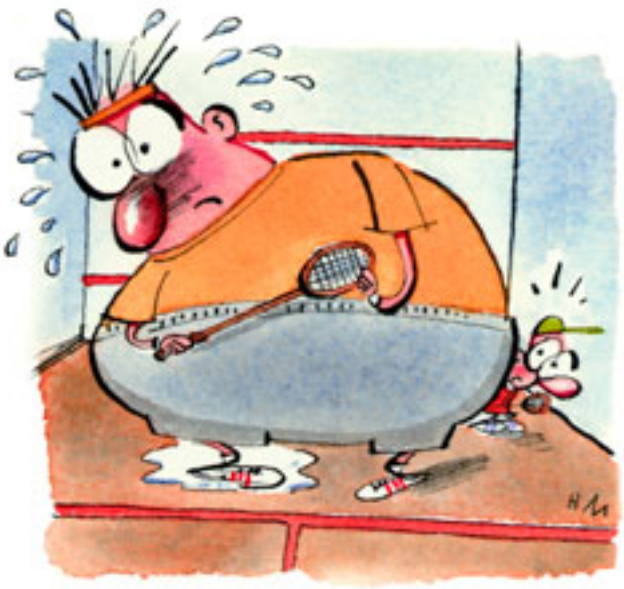
It's tough to keep fit when you smoke a pack a day, start drinking cocktails in the early afternoon, and subsist on a steady diet of red meat and Golden Oreos, so after last year's historic election, I felt like maybe it was time for some change. My goal wasn't necessarily to "stay fit" (the moment for that had long since passed). I would have been content just to slow the atrophy that must inevitably follow from my aversion to physical exercise.

I haven't run any more than a block or two since high school, and stationary bikes and the like always struck me as more than a little emasculating—a man shouldn't exert himself for no reason other than vanity. What I needed was a game—something competitive like billiards or horseshoes but just a tiny bit more physically demanding. You can't play tennis in the winter, and even in the context of my own meager athletic abilities, I'm an outright disgrace on the basketball court. What did intrigue me was squash.

Squash was big in my neighborhood growing up. A lot of my friends had been playing since they were little kids at the Merion Cricket Club, a beautiful facility but not exactly a magnet for Philadelphia's Jewish community. On my trips back home over the last few years, I'd get the occasional invite to go over there for a game, and though I had no natural aptitude for this sport or any other, I enjoyed it.

One thing to note about squash is that despite its elitist reputation, I'm reliably informed by Wikipedia that the game got its start as a sort of wall ball for street kids in 16th-century France. Since then it has evolved a little bit, but it's still more checkers than chess—a kid's game that has players mindlessly chasing a little ball around the court.

And it's a small court. You never have to run more than a few feet in any direction, with the result that my poor physical conditioning doesn't necessarily leave me feeling nauseated within minutes of the first volley. (Which is good, because modern squash is kind of pretentious, and throwing up on the court is an automatic DQ.)



HAL MAYFORTH

It turns out there's a very nice club with a couple of squash courts just a block from my office. I decided to try to join, and, much to my surprise, I was accepted. I'd been blackballed from every club I'd ever attempted to join prior to this—including three separate times in just four years at college.

Not that I was bitter about it back then. Like Groucho Marx, I was sure I didn't want to belong to any club that would have me as a member. I tried one place twice, but only so I could be doubly sure they had high standards. Fortunately, my new club isn't terribly discriminating in whom they allow to join (I even saw Bob Barr there once), and it turns out being accepted isn't so bad.

I started going over two and three times a week to play with one of my colleagues, an hour break in the afternoon to get a little exercise. Taking a smoke break may not be socially acceptable any longer, but it dawned on me only recently that my more health-conscious peers were running a similar scam and managing to avoid any disapproving looks.

Still, it's not clear that I'm making a whole lot of progress in my overall fitness. I'm not losing any weight or developing an A-Rod-like physique. Then again, the goal was only to offset some of my bad habits. Unfortunately I'm having some trouble even meeting that rather unambitious goal. The thing about the club is that the drinks are cheap, and you don't even see the bill until the end of the month. It's like drinking for free.

It's actually possible that I'm losing ground here and am in worse shape than when I embarked on this campaign. But I'm almost 30, I'm married, and the country is well on its way to universal health care, so I'm not too worried about the downward trajectory. Meanwhile, there's a whole slew of activities at the club for someone of my physical characteristics. There's chess, billiards, and card games. There's even a steak night. The only problem is I have to go outside to smoke—which is a little more physical activity than I'm looking for after a couple of drinks and a ribeye.

Michael Goldfarb

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the weekly Standard

Happy New Year, Mullahs

"Liberty" isn't a word you'll find in President Obama's Iranian New Year message to "the people and leaders of the Islamic Republic of Iran." Nor is "freedom." Nor "democracy." Nor "human rights."

Nor will you find any expression of solidarity with the people of Iran—though you'll find plenty of solicitude for their rulers. The president bends over backwards to reassure the mullahs that our government wishes them well.

You'll find a paragraph addressed to "the people and leaders of Iran," as if the people and leaders were in harmony, and shared a need to be reassured that we seek "a future with . . . greater opportunities for partnership and commerce."

You'll find two paragraphs devoted to speaking directly to Iran's leaders. Obama reassures them of his commitment to diplomacy, and to an engagement grounded in "mutual respect." Of course expressions of respect for the people of Iran are nothing new—President Bush reiterated our respect for the people of Iran many times, including a year ago on the occasion of Nowruz, as they call their New Year. No, what's distinctive about Obama's statement is his respect for the "leaders," the clerical dictatorship.

Indeed, "the United States wants the Islamic Republic of Iran to take its rightful place in the community of nations." Note: "the Islamic Republic of Iran." Does Obama routinely refer to Pakistan as the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, its formal name? Of course not. But Obama goes out of his way to mention (twice) "the Islamic Republic of Iran." He's kowtowing to a regime that is anything but republican, implicitly forswearing any plan—any hope—of regime change to free the Iranian people.

Now it's true that Obama's message isn't all sweetness and light. He does urge upon Iran the realization that it cannot take "its rightful place in the community of nations" unless it assumes its "real responsibilities" and realizes "that place cannot be reached through terror or arms, but rather through peaceful actions." That's vague enough to be nonthreatening—which is good, because Obama believes the process of building "constructive ties among the United States, Iran, and the international community . . . will not be advanced by threats."

So there's no reiteration of the demand—heretofore the position not just of the United States but of its European allies—that Iran stop its program for developing nuclear weapons in return for such constructive ties. After all, to demand a stop to the program is implicitly to threaten that there might be consequences if the program isn't stopped—and Obama doesn't believe in threats. He believes that we should speak nicely to our enemies, and carry no stick.

Shortly after the release of the videocast, Iran's energy minister, Parviz Fattah, said that his country would "finish and operate" the Russian-built Bushehr nuclear plant by the end of this year. He, along with a leading adviser to Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, stressed that this nice talk from the American president had to be followed by positive actions. Obama would like mutual respect—but the Iranians smell weakness.

The day before Obama's message was released, reports reached the West that a young Iranian blogger, Omid Mir Sayafi, had died in Tehran's notorious Evin prison. He had been jailed for insulting the country's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, and Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, founder of the Islamic Republic. Another Iranian blogger reported that Sayafi was jailed for writing, "Mr. Khamenei, can you love me as much as you love Sheikh Nasrallah's son?"—questioning Iran's support for Hezbollah. But President Obama has respect for Sayafi's persecutors.

Meanwhile, an imprisoned American, 31-year-old Roxana Saberi, is still being held in Iran, where she was arrested for working as a journalist after the government revoked her press credentials. Appeals from Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and North Dakota's congressional delegation (Saberi grew up in North Dakota) for her release have been ignored, as have demands from executives of major news organizations that Iran explain how she allegedly broke the law, and that an outside group be allowed to visit her. Instead, it looks as if Saberi will remain in prison for at least the two-week period while the government more or less shuts down . . . for Nowruz. But President Obama has respect for Saberi's jailers.

The question is, who in the world will have respect for President Obama?

—*William Kristol*

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Special Envoy to the Taliban

How Jeremiah Wright can serve his country.

BY P.J. O'ROURKE

THOMAS FLUHARTY

". . . part of the success in Iraq involved reaching out to people that we would consider to be Islamic fundamentalists, but who were willing to work with us . . ."

—President Obama, interview with the *New York Times* published March 7, 2009

I've been pondering President Obama's idea to split the Taliban and get some of those maniacal fanatics on our side for a change. It's a magnificent idea. It's not, mind you, a good idea. But it's magnificent—grand, sumptuous, rich, splendid—a great, big, thought-filled ideal of an idea, the kind you'd expect from deep-thinking, idealistic Barack Obama. Boy, is this a thinking man's administration. They are thinking so hard over at the White House, having such bright, shining, effulgent, coruscating thoughts, that if you're a thoughtful person like me (and I'm sure you are), you can't help being carried away with enthusiasm. The next thing you know you're thinking yourself.

Of course I'm not an Ivy League-educated thinker like Obama. But I've got a notion that might help the president. I have the perfect person for the job of splitting the Taliban. I know who the president should appoint. Only one man fills the bill as Special Envoy to the Beard-o's and Weird-o's to Get Them Quarrelling Among Themselves. That man is the Reverend Jeremiah Wright.

I suppose the president isn't listening to me. I'm a Republican, a conservative, and I think the opinion that Rush Limbaugh voiced on Obama's efforts at economic stimulus was too much of an attaboy. But victory in Afghanistan is not a partisan issue. Even I am not Republican enough to wish for an Obama failure in Kabul. Furthermore, I know what I'm talking about. I've seen the Muslim world as an adult, without the distractions of rambunctious Indonesian madrassa schoolmates with their noisy games of dodge-fatwa.

The president isn't listening to me. And Jeremiah Wright isn't speaking to the president. So there are a couple of practical problems with my plan. But President Obama isn't the kind of fellow who'll let something as mundane as reality interfere with hope and change.

Splitting the Taliban is the same hope-to-hell, change-a-roo that the FBI used to destroy Boston organized crime. The FBI gave sympathy, comfort, and wire tap information to Whitey Bulger, Steve "the rifleman" Flemmi, and other members of the Winter Hill Gang. This caused a split between Irish mobsters and Italian mafia. Now all of Boston's organized crime figures are on the lam or in jail and—bonus—so are most of the Boston FBI agents. Organized crime has been eliminated in Boston. Crime is no longer elitist and exclusionary; it has been returned to the common people of Roxbury, Dorchester, and Jamaica Plain.

To give another example, there's the financial bailout strategy to split the assets of troubled banking institutions. Good assets will go to a "good bank." Bad assets will go to a "bad bank." I'm opening a checking account at a bad bank ASAP. New customers at bad banks won't get good things like toasters, they'll get bad things like liquor and guns. And the personalized checks in bad bank checkbooks won't have pretty pictures on them, they'll have printed messages: "This Is a Stick-Up."

Therefore President Obama shouldn't let the fact that Pastor Wright and I are ticked off at him stand in the way of high hopes for big changes in Islamic fundamentalism any more than

P.J. O'Rourke is a contibuting editor to THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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I let the fact that Pastor Wright is a left-wing loony stand in the way of how much I love the guy.

I'm serious about that. Jeremiah Wright is a kick-ass preacher of the Christian gospel. In his infamous post-9/11 "America's chickens are coming home to roost" sermon, Wright talks about Psalm 137, the reggae song one, "By the rivers of Babylon." Wright points out that "this psalm is rarely read in its entirety." Easy to see why when you get to the end and hear the psalmist describe the fun the Hebrews will have when they defeat the Babylonians. "Look at the verse, Verse 9," Wright says,

> "Happy they shall be who take your little ones and dash them against the rocks." The people of faith . . . moved from the hatred of armed enemies to the hatred of unarmed innocents. The babies. The babies. Blessed are they who dash your babies' brains against a rock. . . . Yet that is where the people of faith are in 551 B.C., and that is where far too many people of faith are in 2001 A.D.

Whew. A message applicable to Christians, Jews, and Muslims alike, not to mention Bob Marley. On the other hand Wright draws some conclusions from the gospels that I wouldn't. But so did St. Paul (I Corinthians 7:1, "It is good for a man not to touch a woman").

There's a love of rhetorical skill in the Muslim world. Osama bin Laden doesn't just go on tape cassettes and say, "America sucks." He recites poetry, he finds things that "America sucks" rhymes with. On the flip side of the orthodoxy coin, Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* is hardly a Unitarian mumble of skepticism about the formal doctrines of established religion. The Koran itself is oratory, dictated by the prophet, who could not read or write. (One wonders a bit about Christ's literary, as opposed to rhetorical, learning. In Luke, when Jesus goes to the synagogue and reads from the Book of Isaiah, he gets the text wrong—and improves it.)

Preachers at black churches are the last people left in the English-speaking world who know the schemes and tropes of classical rhetoric: parallelism, antithesis, epistrophe, synecdoche, metonymy, periphrasis, litotes—the whole bag of tricks. A speaker of Arabic can't buy a fig in the market without using most of these at least once. And embodied in a love for rhetoric is an embrace of contradiction—which, in the form of oxymoron, is itself a rhetorical trope.

In 1984, before Obama was born, I was covering the civil war in Lebanon. I was in the southern suburbs of Beirut, an area controlled by Hezbollah, and I got stopped at a checkpoint by teenage Islamic fundamentalists waving their guns around with the safeties off. I turned over my American passport, and one young man began yelling at me. He yelled at me for half an hour, sticking his gun in my face and shouting about how all the terrible things in the world were America's fault—poverty, war, injustice, Zionism. And then, when he was done yelling, he handed back my passport and said, "As soon as I get my Green Card I am going to dentist school in Dearborn, Michigan."

That brings me to another point in favor of letting Pastor Wright deal with the Taliban. They hate America. He hates America. Wright's "God Damn America" sermon, which Obama slept through in 2003, should give the pastor and the Taliban numerous talking points and a basis of mutual interest upon which to build the trust and understanding needed for progress and prosperity in Afghanistan.

Wright has progressed rather prosperously himself damning America. You begin to suspect that Wright's hatred of America is not unlike the hatred of America exhibited by the teen at the Hezbollah checkpoint. That kid's about 40 now, a prominent orthodontist in Bloomfield Hills, and I bet he voted for John McCain. "I stopped by to tell you tonight that governments change," is a less radio-talk-show-quoted passage from the "God Damn America" sermon. Imagine Wright's surprise when the change of government came from a member of his own congregation who would diss him worse than John McCain ever did.

Wright is amusing on the subject. In April 2008, after Obama had washed his hands of Trinity United Church of Christ, Wright told the National Press Club in Washington, "So when Jesus says, not only you brood of vipers, now he's playing the dozens because he's talking about their mamas. To say brood means your mother is an asp, A-S-P. Should we put Jesus out of the congregation?"

In my experience the Muslim world's love of language extends to that natural consequence of having a mouth on you, humor. I was in Kuwait during the run-up to the Iraq war. A shopping center got hit by an Iraqi missile. I went to see the damage and I found a perfume shop where every bottle had burst from the warhead concussion. An American store owner would have been on his cell phone screaming at his insurance agent. The Kuwaiti proprietor was seated comfortably in an armchair, sipping a cup of coffee. When I entered he smiled, gestured at the heaps of broken glass, and said, "Special price."

There is no downside to sending the Reverend Jeremiah Wright to Afghanistan. We'll be able to claim success, because the Taliban will split. The Afghans themselves say that if you put two Afghans in a room you get three factions. Never mind that the Taliban is unlikely to split in a way that leads to a peaceful, law-abiding Afghanistan that doesn't harbor terrorists. The last time there was an Afghanistan like that was in 1.6 million B.C., before humans had arrived in the region. Shipping Wright through the Khyber Pass will also get him out of the United States, much to the relief of the president, the first lady, and most United Church of Christ congregations other than Trinity's. Then there is the off chance that Pastor Wright, with his gifts of oratory, humor, and Afghan-level ability to make everyone furious, will convert the natives. I'm for it. And I'm glad President Obama is "willing to work with" religious fundamentalists. He'll need to when the 2012 GOP national convention is filled with mujahedeen. ♦

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Five Signs of a Flailing Presidency

The White House tries its hand at damage control.

BY FRED BARNES

You don't have to be an old Washington hand to spot the telltale signs of a presidency and an administration in serious trouble. There's nothing new about these clues. The inability to get their stories straight—that's a hardy perennial of high-level officials caught in the vise of political embarrassment. A president who skips town to avoid the White House press corps and speak directly to the American people —we've sure seen that before. So in a sense the AIG mess has touched off nothing more than business as usual.

What goes on in Washington usually comes across as background noise to the public, but not this time. Bonuses for AIG executives are like the infamous Bridge to Nowhere—an issue that's broken through outside Washington. And we know it's become a major political problem for the president because he and his administration act as if it has. Here are five signs of this:

¶ *His allies are moving to protect the president.* In a political emergency, this is the highest obligation of everyone in the administration. The president must be distanced as far as possible from decisions that led to the problem, even if he is made to look out-of-touch or actually incompetent.

In the AIG case, Obama is like a cuckolded spouse, portrayed by administration officials as the last person to learn about the bonuses, though he signed the economic stimulus legislation with a provision assuring they'd be paid. A front-page account in the *Washington Post* played along, absolving the entire administration of blame. Attributed to "government and company officials," the story said Federal Reserve officials were at fault, having failed to alert anyone in the administration, much less Obama, in a timely fashion.

Treasury Secretary Tim Geithner said he didn't tell the White House until March 12, two days after he learned of bonuses totaling $165 million and the day before the checks went out. What could Obama do? He was "stunned," the president told Jay Leno last week. Obama said he takes full responsibility for the mess. Then he went on to blame others.

In the AIG case, Obama is like a cuckolded spouse, portrayed by administration officials as the last person to learn about the bonuses, though he signed the economic stimulus legislation with a provision assuring they'd be paid. A front-page account in the 'Washington Post' played along, absolving the entire administration and blaming the Federal Reserve.

¶ *The president gets out of town.* In the final stages of the Watergate scandal in 1974, President Nixon flew to Cairo, where he was greeted by one million Egyptians along the route of his motorcade. This prompted a question: Can a million Egyptians be wrong? The answer turned out to be yes. Nixon resigned a few weeks later.

Okay, the AIG flap isn't Watergate. But last week was a good time for Obama to skip town, mingle with worshipful fans, and dodge the (suddenly) unfriendly Washington media mob. The idea is to get through to the American people directly, without the press's filtering his every word. So in California, he spoke to a town hall meeting, the preferred venue of presidents under political stress. He was interviewed by a sympathizer on talk radio, then by Jay Leno, who invariably makes his guests look good, then went to a research center for electric cars. He put off a White House press conference until the following week, when the AIG frenzy may have eased.

¶ *Top spokesmen dismiss the crisis as a distraction.* Anything the president doesn't want to deal with or discuss, like AIG bonuses, is automatically a distraction from the important business the American people have elected him to focus on. And Rahm Emanuel, the White House chief of staff, said AIG wasn't just a minor distraction. As furious as Obama was over the bonuses, Emanuel said last week, the president's "main priority is getting the financial system stabilized, and he believes this is a *big* distraction."

Though David Axelrod, Obama's White House political adviser, didn't use the word "distraction," the *Washington Post* reported that he was making the same point. "People are not sitting around their kitchen tables thinking about AIG," he said. "They are thinking about their own jobs." And that's what Obama is thinking about.

¶ *Administration figures can't keep their stories straight.* It's easy to keep your story straight when you're telling the truth. It gets harder when you're not. Geithner initially said he learned of the AIG bonuses on March 10. He tried to give himself wiggle room by saying this was

Fred Barnes is executive editor of THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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when he was informed about the size and scope of the bonuses. This isn't true. It turns out he was questioned on March 3 by Democratic congressman Joe Crowley of New York in very specific terms about the bonuses. Crowley noted that AIG was "slated to pay an additional $162 million in bonuses to 393 participants in the coming weeks." Geithner responded to Crowley that he "very much share[s] your concern" about the bonuses. But don't try to square Geithner's two statements. That would be a distraction.

Democrat Chris Dodd of Connecticut, chairman of the Senate Banking Committee, tied himself in knots denying his role in crafting the provision in the stimulus that kept the bonuses alive. One day he indicated he'd had nothing to do with inserting that provision in the bill. He wasn't even on the Senate-House conference committee that put it in. The next day, he told a different story. Yes, he'd asked senators to include the provision, but he did so only because Treasury officials urged him to. No wonder Dodd is in reelection trouble.

¶ *The president indulges in hyperbole.* Presidents sometimes lose their rhetorical grip during a political controversy. Obama has. He went into high gear defending Geithner. With the exception of Alexander Hamilton, no Treasury secretary has "had to deal with the multiplicity of issues that Secretary Geithner has," he said. "He is making all the right moves in terms of playing a bad hand." Not only that, Obama likened the financial firms Geithner is dealing with to terrorists. "They've got a bomb strapped to them and they've got their hand on the trigger."

One more thing. If Obama is showing the effects of a political crisis, how can he josh about basketball and bowling and other light subjects with Jay Leno? When in trouble, play to your strengths, such as being a likeable, regular guy. It worked with Leno. "Mr. President," he said, "I must say this has been one of the best nights of my life." ♦

The Insubordinate Ambassador

For a diplomat, Christopher Hill has ticked off an awful lot of people. BY STEPHEN F. HAYES

Christopher Hill and North Korea's Kim Kye-Gwan at the six-party talks in Beijing, July 2008

NEWSCOM

On October 11, 2006, three days after North Korea detonated a crude nuclear device, George W. Bush held a press conference. He recommitted the United States to a diplomatic course on North Korea, but ruled out a bilateral meeting with representatives from the rogue regime:

> In order to solve this diplomatically, the United States and our partners must have a strong diplomatic hand, and you have a better diplomatic hand with others sending the message than you do when you're alone. And so, obviously, I made the decision that the bilateral negotiations wouldn't work, and the reason I made that decision is because they didn't.

Stephen F. Hayes is a senior writer at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

Three weeks later, Christopher Hill, a veteran of the Foreign Service, overruled the president. Then the government's chief negotiator on North Korea's nuclear program, now Barack Obama's nominee to serve as U.S. ambassador to Iraq, Hill didn't much care what the president wanted. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice had given Hill permission to meet face-to-face with the North Koreans but only on the condition that diplomats from China were also in the room. Although the Chinese participated in the early moments of the discussions, they soon left. Hill did not leave with them.

North Korea had long sought to deal with the United States bilaterally, more for the legitimacy such direct dealings would confer on the thuggish regime in Pyongyang than because

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they were interested in serious negotiations. Hill granted their wish. According to former CNN reporter Mike Chinoy, in his book *Meltdown: The Inside Story of the North Korean Nuclear Crisis*, Hill had "in effect, accepted terms the North Koreans had been putting forward for most of the previous twelve months"—despite the fact that they were "overtures the Bush administration rejected."

Rice was angry. Chinoy writes: "Although Rice remained supportive of reviving the diplomatic process, . . . Hill had held the bilateral [discussion with North Korean negotiator Kim Gye Gwan] in defiance of her instructions."

Think about that. The secretary of state expressly forbade Hill from participating in bilateral talks. The president of the United States was on record opposing bilateral negotiations. Hill thought he knew better.

Meanwhile, North Korea was on the State Department's list of state sponsors of terror, they had just weeks earlier tested a nuclear device, and we now know, at the very time Hill was conducting his rogue diplomacy, North Korea was supplying nuclear technology to Syria—another nation on the State Department's list of terror sponsors.

Hill had done this before. On July 9, 2005, Rice had given approval for a trilateral meeting with the Chinese and the North Koreans in an effort to get the North Koreans to return to the six-party talks on their nuclear program. North Korea had been boycotting the talks in part because Rice had referred to the North as an "outpost of tyranny" in her confirmation hearings. Curiously, the Chinese didn't show up, as they had promised. Hill nonetheless met alone with the North Koreans and gave them an important propaganda victory. According to the official North Korean news agency: "The U.S. side at the contact made between the heads of both delegations in Beijing clarified that it would recognize the DPRK [North Korea] as a sovereign state, not to invade it and hold bilateral talks within the framework of the six-party talks, and the DPRK side interpreted it as a retraction of its remark designating the former as an 'outpost of tyranny' and decided to return to the six-party talks."

Leaving aside questions of Hill's effectiveness—"We clearly have not achieved our objective with North Korea," Vice President Dick Cheney told me just before leaving office—his rank insubordination and cavalier disregard for presidential prerogatives were surely grounds for dismissal. Instead, Bush kept him in place, and now Barack Obama is rewarding him with what is arguably the most sensitive and important U.S. ambassadorship.

That appointment has stirred some opposition among Republicans. Two weeks ago, John McCain and Lindsay Graham sent Obama a letter pointing out Hill's "controversial" diplomacy on North Korea and his lack of experience in the Middle East. The two senators urged Obama to "reconsider this nomination."

The secretary of state expressly forbade Hill from participating in bilateral talks. The president of the United States was on record opposing them. Hill thought he knew better.

Early last week, five additional Republicans—Jon Kyl, Christopher Bond, Sam Brownback, Jim Inhofe, and John Ensign—signaled their opposition to Hill. In a separate letter to Obama they cited Hill's "unprofessional activities" which include cutting out key State Department officials from policy discussions on North Korea and "breaking commitments made for the record before congressional committees."

It is that last point that could make things difficult for Hill in confirmation hearings scheduled for next week. Brownback believes Hill repeatedly misled him—in public testimony—regarding Hill's willingness to make North Korea's human rights record a component of the six-party talks. In 2008 Brownback placed a hold on the nomination of Hill's deputy Kathy Stevens to be ambassador to South Korea. Brownback said he would lift that hold if Hill would promise to include Jay Lefkowitz, the special envoy for Human Rights in North Korea, in all further discussions with the North Koreans. Hill made the promise and Brownback lifted his hold on Stevens.

On October 2, 2008, Lefkowitz met with President Bush and several NSC staffers to discuss the possibility of making one last push on human rights in North Korea. Bush was enthusiastic. Hill, despite his pledge to Brownback and despite the president's enthusiasm, never invited Lefkowitz to join the talks.

When Hill made the rounds on Capitol Hill last Tuesday, he told Brownback that the White House, and specifically National Security Adviser Steve Hadley, blocked him from bringing Lefkowitz to the negotiations with North Korea. Several officials with knowledge of those discussions disputed Hill's story and said, in fact, that NSC and Hadley pushed to include human rights.

Brownback, for one, isn't buying. Although Hill has the support of several important backers—former ambassador Ryan Crocker, Republican senator Richard Lugar, and Generals David Petraeus and Ray Odierno—Brownback may still place a hold on his nomination.

"He didn't follow the law," Brownback told me, referring to the North Korean Human Rights Act. "He misled me completely. He was very difficult to deal with. And the six-party talks failed."

Brownback is undeterred by arguments that there is an urgency to fill the post in Baghdad. "People wanted someone at Treasury quickly and looked past [Timothy] Geithner's problems—tax evasion and his time at the New York Fed. We need to take the time to get the right person in the job. I appreciate what Petraeus and Odierno are saying. But we need someone who will follow the law and the direction of the president." ♦

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End Corporate Welfare

It's as corrupting as the other kind.

BY MATTHEW CONTINETTI

When news broke last week that insurance giant AIG—into which the federal government has poured close to $200 billion since last September—planned to pay out $165 million in bonuses to executives in its financial products group, the backlash was swift. And understandable. These are the blockheads who pioneered the use of credit default swaps that purportedly allowed banks and other investors to hedge against losses in the secondary mortgage market. In so doing, they created new financial instruments and hence a new marketplace that, for a while anyway, flourished wildly. It didn't last.

The real estate bubble popped and took the banking sector and AIG down with it. AIG didn't have the money to pay the counterparties to its swaps. The feds stepped in and began pumping cash into the insurer so it could pay its counterparties—the likes of European giants Deutsche Bank and Société Générale and Wall Street's Goldman Sachs and Merrill Lynch. To do otherwise, sayeth the Treasury, would invite a "systemic collapse" of the swap market, and thereby the destruction of the firms who participated in it. Who knows what sort of financial apocalypse would ensue?

That's why the American taxpayer is keeping AIG on life support. The economic risks of letting it fail, we are told, are greater than the economic risks of allowing it to live as a zombie. But when Fed chairman Ben Bernanke, Treasury Secretary Hank Paulson, and—you may have heard of this next guy—then-New York Fed president Timothy Geithner came up with this plan, they did not think of the political risks involved. Big mistake.

What Bernanke, Paulson, and Geithner did not recognize is that, as soon as a company is bailed out, social justice replaces market justice. In the private marketplace, bonuses and other forms of executive compensation are deemed necessary to maintain a competitive edge. Otherwise "talent" leaves for another company. The value or justice of such compensation isn't determined by ethics, morality, philosophy, or civics. It's determined by the market. And the market is amoral. Indeed, had AIG's fate been left to the marketplace, those executives owed bonuses, like everyone else to whom the firm owed money, would be standing in a long, long line at the bankruptcy court, with very little hope of recovery.

> Obama and Congress can fulminate, preen, and retaliate all they want. It won't solve the problem. Major financial institutions are now on the public dole.

Ever since last August, the U.S. government has removed dozens of entities—Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, AIG, Citigroup and Bank of America, GM and Chrysler—from the private market and placed them in the political market. It has done this because the alternative, doing nothing, is apparently too horrible to contemplate. Fine. No one wants the global economy to collapse. But the government also ought to understand that, as soon as these institutions enter the political market, the way in which they are managed becomes subject to political (i.e., moral, philosophical, and ideological) considerations. It becomes a matter of public debate.

Clearly the Democrats who run the government do not understand this. If they did, they would neither have requested nor permitted the chairman of the Senate Banking Committee, Christopher Dodd, to insulate AIG from a provision in the stimulus bill that capped bonuses for companies receiving federal dollars. If they did, Treasury Secretary Geithner would have prepared a political strategy to deal with the fallout at the moment he first heard about the bonuses. Didn't happen. As recently as Sunday, March 15, White House economics adviser Lawrence Summers was telling the media that, while he didn't like the payouts, they were "contractually obligated," and there was nothing the government could do about them.

Within 24 hours of that pronouncement, of course, President Obama was saying that the administration would do everything in its power to recoup the money. Congress marched AIG chairman Edward Liddy—who came out of retirement to wind down the company and takes a dollar-a-year salary—in front of the cameras so it could publicly beat its chest and howl at the injustice *it abetted*. House Democrats passed legislation to tax the bonuses at Eisenhower-era 90 percent marginal rates. The anger fed on itself. The reaction launched a thousand potentially destructive policies. The moment called for presidential leadership. But Obama was unavailable because he had to run to California for two town halls and an appearance on Jay Leno's *Tonight* show.

Obama and Congress can fulminate, preen, and retaliate all they want. It won't solve the problem. The problem is that major financial institutions are now on the public dole, and will be accountable to the public as long as they are. Already there's news that (1) Fannie and Freddie are

Matthew Continetti is associate editor of THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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about to hand out their own bonuses, (2) Citigroup is planning on building a $10 million executive suite, and (3) 13 bailed-out institutions owe more than $200 million to the IRS. How will the Democrats respond to these new injustices, and the further injustices that are sure to emerge?

It took the United States several long and painful decades to learn that public assistance to individuals encourages destructive behavior. Welfare promotes dependency and gives rise to social pathologies such as illegitimacy, crime, and substance abuse. It also warps politics, dividing the public into those who want to give more and demand less and those who want to give less and demand more. Eventually we learned our lesson and reformed welfare so that the program encouraged work and self-reliance. Welfare rolls plummeted. None of the dreadful repercussions the pro-welfare lobby fantasized about came to pass.

It seems that the same lessons apply to the financial welfare program begun last year. Direct cash assistance—the bailout—fosters a culture of dependence and entitlement. It does nothing to discourage irresponsible corporate behavior. The financial welfare cases shuffle along, moving from blunder to blunder, sparking an empty furor and punitive measures that miss the mark. Whereas the job of politics was once to promote growth in the market economy, it's now preoccupied with limiting the damage created in the political economy. And everyone suffers.

This is a horrible situation. It threatens Obama's presidency and the future of the American economy. The time has come for a financial welfare reform that gets these institutions off the public dole and promotes responsible accounting and corporate governance. Forget about retribution. Where is the plan for recognizing financial losses, for reorganizing or closing failed firms, for an orderly withdrawal of federal support from zombie institutions? The first party or political leader to apply the lessons of welfare reform to the financial crisis will benefit the country—and profit at the polls. ♦

Empire State Special

Can the AIG issue elect a Republican in New York's 20th? BY JOHN MCCORMACK

Latham, N.Y.

If Republicans are ever going to recover a majority in Congress, they'll need to start by retaking districts like New York's 20th.

Democrat Kirsten Gillibrand wrested the upstate district from incumbent Republican John Sweeney by 6 percentage points in 2006, amidst allegations that Sweeney beat his wife and showed up—uninvited and drunk—at a frat party. Ever since Gillibrand vacated the seat when she was appointed to the Senate in late January, Republican state assembly minority leader Jim Tedisco and Democrat Scott Murphy, a venture capitalist, have been sprinting toward a special election on March 31.

While that election can't seriously shift the balance of power in Washington—Democrats control the House 254 to 178—both national parties have taken a keen interest in the race. Republicans, looking for a morale-boosting victory after November's drubbing, have flooded the district with cash and sent high-profile figures like Rudy Giuliani to campaign for Tedisco. Democrats, concerned that a defeat will be seen as a rebuff to Obama's economic policies, have likewise called in the big guns. Bill Clinton held a fundraiser for Murphy a couple of weeks ago, and Murphy told a crowd of 75 supporters at Bard College last Sunday, "I spent an hour and a half in [the White House] Situation Room talking to [Obama's] political advisers about the race and how they could be involved."

Talk of the economy has sucked up almost all of the oxygen in this race. For weeks Murphy hammered Tedisco for not coming out firmly for or against the stimulus package. "I may be wrong about the Economic Recovery Act. It may not work, but I'll tell you I would have voted for it, and I'll work hard to make sure we get our fair share here in the 20th District," Murphy told the audience at Bard. "My opponent seems to think you can avoid saying that. I guess it's something you learn in Albany after 27 years—ways to answer questions without telling people anything. I don't think that's the way you govern. I don't think that's the way that you should lead."

Tedisco had, in fact, taken a qualified position on the stimulus—that he would have voted for it if it had included an amendment to cut wasteful spending. But last Monday, as furor erupted over AIG's $165 million bonuses, Tedisco removed any doubt about where he stood on the stimulus. "No. That's the answer," Tedisco said of how he would have voted. He conceded at a press conference that he "made a mistake" in lacking the "clarity I should have had at the beginning of the discussion" of the stimulus.

In the following days, the candidates cut dueling ads, with Tedisco attacking Murphy for supporting the stimulus's provision allowing AIG bonuses and Murphy attacking Tedisco for opposing the stimulus's tax cuts and jobs programs. "Did Scott Murphy knowingly support a bill that handed out millions in taxpayer-funded bonuses to greedy Wall Street executives, or did he simply not read the bill?" Tedisco said last Wednesday. "Taxpayers are mad as hell and deserve answers and accountability—it's time Scott Murphy explained himself."

John McCormack is a deputy online editor at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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Rather than answer that question, Murphy decided to take a heads-he-wins, tails-Tedisco-loses approach. Murphy's campaign denied that he supported the provision in the stimulus to allow the AIG bonuses while claiming that Tedisco actually opposed executive pay caps because he opposed the stimulus, which included a pay cap provision. In other words, Murphy denies that he supports every provision in the bill while insisting that Tedisco must be opposed to every provision in the bill.

The stimulus isn't the only issue on which Murphy is less than straightforward. After the campaign event at Bard, Murphy wouldn't say if he supports the Solomon amendment, which prevents federal funds from flowing to colleges that bar military recruiters or ROTC from their campuses. "I haven't looked into it. I've got to do some more research," Murphy said of the amendment, sponsored by Gerald Solomon, who once held the House seat Murphy is vying for.

While a student at Harvard, Murphy cosigned an anti-ROTC editorial in 1989 that argued that the U.S. military was a racist, sexist, and anti-gay institution and that the "values enforced by the military—submission to authority, unquestioning obedience, and a hierarchy of power—are contrary to the University's values of independence, thoughtful inquiry, and equality for all."

Murphy told me that he now thinks ROTC should be allowed on campuses, in part because the military changed its policy to "Don't ask, don't tell." Yet when asked if he now supports gays' openly serving in the military, Murphy wouldn't say.

Murphy's antimilitary baggage, however, hasn't dragged him down in the race. He comes across as a likable guy who peppers his talk with personal anecdotes about dealing with health insurance and his children's public school teachers. You might not know that he is a yuppie transplant from Manhattan with children named Duke, Lux, and Simone (after the feminist existentialist Simone de Beauvoir).

Murphy has largely neutralized his liberal liabilities. The 39-year-old candidate has tacked to the right on guns and casts himself as a "fiscal conservative." He sells himself as a calm entrepreneur and problem-solver. "If you want someone who's great at grabbing a microphone and making an argument and riling people up, you should vote for my opponent," he said recently.

Murphy's right that Tedisco has a better record of channeling populist outrage—the 58-year-old Republican led the charge against Eliot Spitzer's plan to give driver's licenses to illegal immigrants. But right now, both campaigns are courting the pitchfork brigade. Tedisco and Republicans have slammed Murphy for his company's failure to pay taxes on time, paying out bonuses at a company that failed to turn a profit, and creating jobs in India. The Murphy campaign has pounced on Tedisco for allegedly inappropriately spending state money on per diems, creating a job for a friend, and opposing executive pay caps.

GOP candidate Jim Tedisco

Tedisco has maintained a lead throughout the short race, but the latest poll, taken before the AIG scandal, showed that Murphy had surged, cutting Tedisco's double-digit lead to 4 points. Some press reports overstate the extent to which Tedisco is favored simply because there are 70,000 more registered Republicans than Democrats in the district. The Republican registration edge has declined by about 20,000 since 2004, and pollster Stuart Rothenberg, writing in *Roll Call*, argues that "party registration is a lagging indicator," adding that "private polling confirms that the district's current generic partisanship is much closer to even than the registration numbers suggest."

In the most important polls—actual election results—Democrats have won the last two cycles. Bush carried the district by 8 points in 2004, but in 2008 Obama edged out McCain by about 5 points, and Gillibrand crushed her GOP challenger by 24 points. Clearly the district has trended Democratic.

Tedisco attributes this shift to the cyclical nature of politics. "You're going to get some downturns in the economy," he told me. "The world's never perfect, and when you govern for that long, there are some things that are beyond your control. The other affiliation can take advantage of that."

Now Tedisco and the Republicans see an opportunity to take advantage of the AIG scandal in a district that is essentially up for grabs and give the party a boost heading into next year's midterm elections. Other issues will emerge in the next 19 months, so it might be a stretch to read the result in this race as a harbinger for 2010. For example, neither candidate could cite a foreign policy disagreement with the other (both agree on the withdrawal plan for Iraq, the surge in Afghanistan, and the closure of Guantánamo).

But for now it's probably fair to say, with apologies to Frank Sinatra, that if Republicans can't make it in New York's 20th, they can't make it anywhere. ♦

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Dr. Brooks Landon is a Professor of English and Collegiate Fellow at The University of Iowa and Director of The University of Iowa General Education Literature Program. From 1999 to 2005, Professor Landon was chair of the Iowa English Department. He received his Ph.D. from The University of Texas at Austin.

Among Professor Landon's numerous awards and accolades are a University of Iowa M.L. Huit Teaching Award and an International Association for the Fantastic in the Arts Distinguished Scholarship.

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Tough Times in EUtopia

The continent's politicians think the undemocratic character of the European Union is a virtue. They have miscalculated.

By Andrew Stuttaford

Sometimes truth just has to speak to powerlessness. Addressing the EU's sham parliament in mid-February, the Czech Republic's refreshingly tactless and refreshingly Thatcherite president, Václav Klaus, raised the awkward topic of what the EU euphemistically refers to as its "democratic deficit" and told MEPs that they were part of this problem, not its solution:

> Since there is no European *demos*—and no European nation—this defect cannot be solved by strengthening the role of the European parliament either. This would, on the contrary, make the problem worse and lead to an even greater alienation between the citizens of the European countries and Union institutions.

Klaus's listeners were predictably outraged. They ought to have been terrified. With the EU economies falling apart at an unprecedented pace, there is nothing that these toy-town parliamentarians can do—except get out of the way.

Andrew Stuttaford, who writes frequently about cultural and political issues, works in the international financial markets.

GARY LOCKE

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The EU's insultingly undemocratic nature is not news (indeed, it is part of its rationale), but it remains the key to grasping how those who run the EU have, for better and worse, had so much success in ramming their agenda through. Not having to bother too much about national electorates has been a great boon to Brussels. As the continent's economies slide ever deeper into the mire, however, that once handy feature could end up crashing the entire system.

An economic debacle on the current scale is going to shake any political structure, however securely moored, but the EU's persistent recourse to a form of soft authoritarianism has left it peculiarly ill suited to weather the storm to come. After decades of routinely bypassing its voters the union may well no longer have what it takes to secure their approval for the harsh medicine and painful sacrifices necessary to bring the EU through this ordeal in one piece. After all, it can barely even get them to vote: Turnout for the most recent (2004) elections for the EU parliament sank to a record low of 45.5 percent. Admittedly that total was dragged down by massively uninterested Eastern Europeans (only 16.7 percent of Slovaks voted and 20.4 percent of Poles), but it was sparse almost everywhere: Only 39 percent of Brits showed up, about the same percentage as made it to the voting booth in the Netherlands, one of the EU's founding nations.

The EU's persistent recourse to a form of soft authoritarianism has left it ill suited to weather the economic storm to come.

As the history of the union's occasional, grudgingly granted referenda—a sorry saga of chicanery, rejection and do-overs—reminds us, appeals to the supposed solidarity of that imaginary European *demos* have never really worked. And that was in the good times. They surely won't do the trick now, nor will arguments based on the logic of a free market ideology widely, if inaccurately, said to have failed. Yet to steer a course through what may become hideously hard times without much in the way of popular consent threatens to push already alienated electorates in the direction of the extremist politics of left or right.

The story of this slump is too familiar to need repeating here, but it is worth pausing to consider how the introduction of the euro has left the EU marooned on a circle of economic hell all of its own making. Imposed on most of the European heartland by a characteristic combination of bullying, bribery, conclave, and legerdemain, the single currency was put in place with as little regard for the real world as for the ballot box. To squeeze a wide range of vastly divergent economies (and to do so with few safety nets) into one monetary system made little sense except when understood as a matter of politics, not economics. But economics has a nasty habit of biting back.

Up until the eruption of the present crisis, the European Central Bank's interest rate policy primarily reflected the needs of France and Germany, Euroland's largest economies. This left rates "too" low for naturally faster growing countries like Ireland and Spain, which in turn inflated unsustainable housing bubbles. These have now burst—in Ireland's case taking much of the banking system down with it. On some forecasts Irish GDP may shrink by 10 percent between 2008 and 2010, a dismal number that could eventually prove too optimistic. Gloomsters joke bleakly that the difference between Ireland and Iceland is six months and one consonant. Spain meanwhile now boasts an official (in other words, understated) unemployment rate of 14 percent. Over 600,000 migrant workers have been laid off. This is not a recipe for social peace.

In other countries, most notably a horribly in-hock Italy (public sector debt over 100 percent of GDP and expanding fast), low interest rates allowed governments to put off long overdue structural reforms. Instead of forcing the introduction of the badly needed discipline that was allegedly one of the principal reasons for its adoption, the euro (a hard currency when compared with shabbier predecessors such as the lira or drachma) was treated as a free pass. It has been anything but. Even before the current mess, Italy's crucial export sector was finding it difficult to cope with the brutal combination of rising cost inflation and a currency far stronger than the accommodating, and periodically devalued, lira. On some estimates, this latest recession is the fourth that Italy has suffered in the last seven years. Back in 2005 Silvio Berlusconi described the euro as a "disaster" for his country. He was not exaggerating.

Devaluations are to GDP what steroids are to sport. In the long-term they may be unhealthy, but in the short-term they frequently work miracles. The problem is that the option is no longer so easily available for the nations that adopted the euro. Italy, Ireland, and a number of other countries are in the grip of a one-sized currency that could never fit all, and the euro is now for them little more than a straitjacket or, more accurately, a noose. They have theoretically retained enough sovereignty to quit the euro, but for one of them to do so, especially if other states stick with the common currency, would be to risk something close to complete economic meltdown.

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Money would pour out (so much so that capital controls would probably be required), interest rates would soar, and the reborn national currency would plummet. In the absence of a bailout from the eurozone it had just abandoned, the exiting country itself would probably be driven to renege (either *de facto* or *de jure*) on its foreign debt—as would much of its private business. In its consequences, this could be a Lehman-plus trauma with possibly devastating effects on already chaotic international capital markets. No less critically, it could set off a crisis in confidence in the credit of those weaker nations that had kept faith with the single currency, not to speak of feebler economies elsewhere. The cure, therefore, could well be worse than the disease.

In the meantime, in a damned-if-you-do, damned-if-you-don't spasm, the markets are fretting that the disease is turning ever more dangerous—and, in a process that feeds upon itself, ever more infectious. Spreads on sovereign debt yields within the eurozone (between German *Bunds*, say, and paper issued by Spain, Greece, Portugal, Italy, and Ireland) have widened noticeably. This is a warning that investors are beginning to think a once unthinkable thought: that one or more of the zone's less resilient members might go into default. On this logic these countries can neither afford to keep the euro nor to junk it. Rock, meet hard place.

These worries are made even more pressing by concern over the impact of Eastern Europe's spiraling economic woes on the already shattered finances of the western half of the continent. Contrary to some of the more excitable headlines, not all the countries of formerly Warsaw Pact Europe are, yet, in deep trouble, but the problems of those that are (notably Hungary, Ukraine, Romania, and Latvia) threaten to wreck confidence in those that are not. And those problems will not be confined safely behind the Oder-Neisse line: Two of Sweden's largest banks, for instance, are frighteningly overexposed to the faltering Baltic States, while their counterparts in Austria, seemingly lost in nostalgic Habsburg reverie, have reportedly lent out the equivalent of 70 percent of their country's GDP to once *kaiserlich und königlich* territories and parts nearby.

Eastern Europe's problems are Western Europe's and, given Eastern Europe's dependence on Western capital flows, vice versa, a state of affairs that neither side appreciates. Infuriated by the impression that they were being sidelined by the upcoming "G-20+" summit in London, nine of the EU's former Soviet bloc members held their own breakaway meeting earlier this month to discuss what to do. Meanwhile, led by Germany's indignant Angela Merkel in full prudent-Hausfrau, Thatcher-handbag mode, the Westerners have tried to damp down the East's increasingly aggressive demands for assistance. Good luck with that. Demonstrating a keenly cynical awareness of which buttons to press, the Hungarian prime minister warned that a severe slowdown in the East could lead to "a flood of unemployed immigrants traveling to Western Europe in search of jobs."

If you suspect that all this leaves the EU looking somewhat stuck, you would be right. But then this is no accident. The lack of democratic responsiveness so thoroughly ingrained into the union's architecture was always intended to stop the bloc's politicians from succumbing to the temptations of protectionism, beggar-thy-neighbor devaluations, and other questionable devices often found in the toolbox of an economically desperate national government. That's all very well, and all very praiseworthy, but it doesn't do anything about the desperation, a desperation that will be felt all the more sharply by electorates looking for their leaders to do something, *anything*, in response to this crunch—only to discover to their chagrin (to use too gentle a word) that there is little that the EU will, legally or politically, allow those leaders to do.

To take just one example, earlier this year Britain saw a series of wildcat strikes protesting the importation of cheap foreign workers from elsewhere in the union as a means of undercutting the locals. The facts that triggered the dispute are murky, but what is certain is that even if the British government had wanted to intervene under EU law it could not. Equally, while the opposition Tories grumbled, nobody was fooled. If the Conservatives had been in charge, they would have done just the same as Labour: nothing. If you want to drive voters to the political extremes, stories like this are a good place to start.

Except that "start" is the wrong word. Parties of the extreme, whether of left or right, already have more than a foothold in Germany and France. "Populists" of every description can be found in the legislatures in countries from Belgium to Denmark to Latvia to Austria to Poland to Hungary. Take your pick: There are plenty to choose from. Even in never-so-sedate-as-it-seems Britain, a country that has made a fetish (if not always convincingly) of its moderation, the much-reviled far rightists of the hitherto tiny British National party are showing some signs of evolving from being useful bogeymen for the left into a party with demonstrable political clout within elements of a white working class that has been neglected for too long.

The backgrounds and the prospects of these movements vary widely from country to country, as do the pasts and the resentments that have shaped them, but in recent years their appeal has begun to grow in sections of the electorate pummeled by the dislocations brought about by mass immigration and globalization—dislocations made all the

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more painful by the realization that the ruling elites who never really asked them for their opinion on these changes, let alone their agreement to them, couldn't give a damn about their plight. This is a perception that will only be sharpened when the populations of these countries, more and more of whom are losing their jobs, are told by that very same political class that protection is off the agenda and that austerity is on, that saving local industries is unacceptable, and that helping out foreign countries is a must. And, oh yes, none of this was our fault—it was all the bankers' doing—and, oh yes, they and their bonuses have got to be rescued too.

So what's next? The leaders of the EU countries will do their best to muddle through in rickety, unpopular unity. Here and there they will cheat both on each other and on the key EU principle of a single market. The warning signs are already there. In February, President Sarkozy attacked the way that French auto companies were supplying their home market from manufacturing facilities in the Czech Republic. The previous month, Britain's Gordon Brown had criticized the amount of overseas lending by the UK's beleaguered bailed-out banks. Nevertheless, however awkwardly, however reluctantly, the EU's members will attempt to hang together—for as long as (or indeed longer than) their domestic politics comfortably permit, an effort that will inevitably further boost the appeal of the wild men of the fringes.

Wildcat strikes in Britain, February 2009

ANNA GOWTHORPE / PA WIRE URN:6834914 (PRESS ASSOCIATION VIA AP IMAGES)

That said, as the EU's leaders are all too well aware, the slump has so far brought down two European governments (in Latvia and non-EU Iceland). Nobody wants to be next, let alone run the risk of political and economic breakdown. The few remaining traces of the budgetary discipline that supposedly still underpins the euro will therefore probably be scrapped. The euro may hang on to its reach, but only at the cost of its integrity. To ordinary Germans this will be seen as a betrayal, a *dolchstoss* even. A people haunted by memories of where a debauched currency can lead, they only agreed to part with their much-cherished deutsche mark on the understanding that the euro would be run with Bundesbank-style discipline. That was then.

So money will be thrown around, the imperiled brethren of both East and West will, after much shoving, screaming, and hesitation, be bailed out. Some protectionist measures (directed against those outside the EU) will be brought in and all fingers will be crossed. It won't be pretty, but with luck, it might be enough to stave off catastrophe. Pushing *their* luck, some glass-is-half-full Europhiles believe that the fact that no country can easily work its way through these tribulations alone will conclusively make the case for still closer European integration to some of the EU's more reluctant federalists. You can be sure that this is a rationalization that Brussels will look to exploit: Rahm Emanuel is not the only politician unwilling to waste a crisis. The EU's policy response to the slump is likely to have two objectives: the reconstruction of member-states' economies and the destruction of what's left of their autonomy. Going for the latter could well drive even more disaffected voters into the extremist fringe, though Brussels is arrogant enough to persist. There are already indications that the eurocrats may be pushing at an open door. In a startling example of mistaking the *Titanic* for the lifeboat, Poland has become just one of several nations speeding up plans to sign up for the euro—and the safe haven it is meant to represent.

On the other hand if, as appears disturbingly likely, the economic situation grows far darker, it's easy to draw an alternative picture in which both euro and union come under previously unimaginable stress, stress with unpredictable and potentially ominous consequences, stress that will be echoed and intensified by mounting political and social disorder in a Europe that discovers, too late, that there was something to be said for democracy after all. ♦

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A GOP Comeback

Will it start with New Jersey's Chris Christie?

By Jennifer Rubin

The 2009 New Jersey gubernatorial race is an unlikely platform from which to launch Republicans' comeback. After all, New Jersey Republicans have come to resemble Charlie Brown and that elusive football. Each cycle hope springs eternal that this will be their time to connect with voters. But time and again, hope in the spring has turned into disappointment in November. In Senate races in 1996 and 2002 (the latter with the help of a controversial last-minute substitution for the embattled Robert Torricelli), Democrats held on. Republicans' optimism also proved to be misplaced in gubernatorial contests in 2001 and 2005.

Barack Obama won the state by a 57-42 percent margin. Democrats hold both U.S. Senate seats and eight of the thirteen congressional districts. They enjoy an advantage in party registration of approximately 600,000 voters. New Jersey is the country's most urban state at a time when Republicans are losing overwhelmingly in the cities. And, on top of all that, the incumbent governor is a multimillionaire who can self-finance in a state regarded as among the most expensive in which to campaign.

Yet, New Jersey Republicans believe that they have an opportunity to stage an upset and make a powerful statement that, given the right candidate and the right message, they can win in the Northeast. New Jersey Republican chairman Tom Wilson contends, "New Jersey is fundamentally a blueish state that goes red under the right circumstances." He believes there are ample reasons for Republicans to think these might be the right circumstances.

The biggest reason for Republican optimism is the incumbent governor, Jon Corzine. In a February Monmouth/Gannett poll only 34 percent of New Jersey voters approved of Corzine's job performance, and 72 percent believed the state is on the "wrong track." He's consistently garnered less than 40 percent of the vote in polls, a tell-tale sign of an at-risk incumbent. In two March surveys, he trailed the most likely Republican challenger 15 and 9 points, respectively.

Corzine came into office with high expectations that, as a former Goldman Sachs chief executive, he could turn around the state's image and fortunes. But his first term has been beset with troubles. There were the payments regarded as "hush money" to his ex-girlfriend and union president Carla Katz and her brother-in-law Rocco Riccio. Of the latter the *Asbury Park Press* wrote:

> The whole episode stinks. Aside from Corzine's handling of the situation, which smacks of typical New Jersey politics—throw money at any and all problems to make them go away—there are too many unanswered questions about the Corzine-Katz-Riccio soap opera. Chief among them are the payout and a $15,000 gift Corzine gave Riccio in early 2007, the multimillion-dollar "settlement" Corzine gave Katz when their relationship ended and Corzine's overzealous efforts to block public disclosure of his e-mail exchanges with Katz during union negotiations.

Then came the near fatal car crash which occurred as Corzine, with no seatbelt, was speeding at over 90 miles per hour to a photo-op with Don Imus and members of the Rutgers women's basketball team. Corzine admitted that he had "set a very bad example." The *New York Times* observed in April 2007, "Underpinning the outpouring of sympathy and well wishes, there was palpable anger and resentment among residents here and across the state over what they see as a serious lapse in judgment."

New Jersey has been especially hard hit by the downturn in the financial sector and massive layoffs on Wall Street. The state has a $7 billion budget deficit. New Jersey regularly ranks at the bottom for business-friendliness. Politicians on both sides of the aisle bemoan the fact that Pennsylvania governor Ed Rendell "comes across the river" to poach business for his lower tax state on a weekly basis.

Other issues that have angered suburban voters include Corzine's plan to end the state property rebate system (after promising to cut property taxes), his unpopular affordable housing law, which foists low cost units on rural and suburban townships, and the system of school funding—which suburban residents think has shortchanged their schools. A recently released state school report showed that more than 40 percent of middle school children (70 percent in some urban districts) are failing proficiency exams. And then there were ideas like leasing out the New Jersey Turnpike and Garden State Parkway, which one local official says "was so dead on arrival it should never have left his desk." And in a belated effort to shed his Wall Street image, Corzine has

Jennifer Rubin is the Washington editor for Pajamas Media and blogs at Commentary *magazine's Contentions website.*

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even proposed suing Lehman Brothers and its accountant for "misrepresentations" that resulted in the state purchasing $182 million in Lehman securities in 2008 and incurring more than $100 million in losses.

Corzine does not yet evoke the same level of anger that swept Democrat Jim Florio out of power in 1993, but as one Republican official put it, "He was the Wall Street executive who was going to make government work. But people don't think Corzine can move the ball from point A to point B."

Republicans outside the state are ready to pounce. Nick Ayers, executive director of the Republican Governors Association, says: "There is no amount of resources or voter registration Corzine can hide behind to protect himself from his record. The governor's reelection is predicated on his job performance. It is a referendum."

A county Republican official agrees: "Corzine will be trying to blame everything on the national and world economy. But that's really wrong. For the last eight years the Democrats—and they control the assembly and the senate too—spent like drunken sailors. They don't know what it means to rein in spending." He notes that their fiscal management had been so bad that they were using bonds to pay for ordinary operating expenses.

New Jersey Republicans, however, have learned that an ineffective Democratic incumbent is no guarantee of a Republican victory. They think they finally have a viable challenger: one who can both navigate the Republican primary and match up well in the general election.

Chris Christie doesn't look like a Republican savior. He hasn't held statewide office and has only one term as Morris County freeholder—the equivalent of a member of the local board of supervisors—and he lost his reelection bid. He looks less like a politician than a high school wrestling coach. Unlike previous "self-funded" Republican candidates, he also has no reservoir of personal wealth to help get the message out.

Yet, Christie's seven years as New Jersey's U.S. attorney have given him a statewide appeal. Appointed by George W. Bush, he put together an impressive track record of crime-busting and corruption-fighting with guilty pleas or convictions of more than 130 appointed or elected officials (including former Newark mayor Sharpe James)—which evinces comparisons to Rudy Giuliani. He had a high-profile prosecution of almost a dozen Republicans and a couple Democrats in Monmouth County, not to mention Jim Treffinger—the leading 2002 Republican candidate for the U.S. Senate before he was indicted. This has, largely, insulated Christie from complaints of playing politics with his office.

While Christie recently announced that he is pro-life (explaining that the birth of his children made a difference in his thinking) and supports banning partial-birth abortions and requiring parental notification and a 24-hour waiting period, social issues are not his focus. Instead he is going after Corzine's fiscal record and running as a reformer—on the budget, corruption, urban blight, and education.

Christie, 46, grew up in Newark, which, he explains, now has "only 50 percent of the population that was there when I was born." His years as an attorney have honed his verbal skills and talent for making a fact-based case. He runs through his arguments (why Corzine is vulnerable, what campaign money can buy you—and can't—and what's wrong with the state's economy), enumerating each and repeating his reasons in a tight summary at the end. He rarely fumbles his lines and, unlike other inexperienced politicians, there is nary a "you know" or "uh" in his answers.

Christie exudes a sense of humor and buoyancy, mixing in stories about his Bruce Springsteen fandom with feisty jabs at his opponent. It's a sharp contrast with Corzine, who rarely glad-hands and has been criticized as cold and remote. Christie hasn't lost the excitement of a political newcomer—expressing a gee-whiz amazement that volunteers would pack his campaign office on Valentine's Day to make calls on his behalf.

His argument for his candidacy is simple. "The governor has been a serious disappointment to people in the state," he contends. "Three years ago he said he was the financial wizard of Wall Street. Now we're in worse shape than we were three years ago—and not just because of the national economy." At the top of his indictment is the state's "unsustainable" spending. "We are creating an atmosphere where state spending is the tail wagging the dog." To support that ever-burgeoning government, Christie argues, the Democrats have had to maintain an exorbitant level of taxation (9 percent state income tax) plus corporate taxes and other business fees and licensing requirements, which discourage employers from locating in the state. He vows, "I will recruit more business."

Christie is aware that if he is to win he will have to appeal in urban and suburban areas with a problem-solving message. He ticks off his plans for urban redevelopment—"Improve public safety, grow jobs, improve education." He recently rolled out a fiscal plan to cut spending, contain lucrative state labor obligations, create an elected state auditor position, and make use of the line-item and "conditional" vetoes.

Christie's biggest challenge may be money. Jennifer Duffy of the *Cook Political Report* observes that in New Jersey, "If you are carpet bombing the New York and Philadelphia TV markets, you can overwhelm your opponents." New Jersey has a public financing system for both primaries and general elections that provides two dollars for every one a candidate raises. But Corzine spent more than

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$60 million of his own funds in his first race and has tens of millions more at his disposal. Christie maintains a brave face. "It is a reality Jon Corzine will outspend me," but "We'll have money to get our message out. The governor has a record he has to run on and defend. . . . He'll need every nickel he has to defend his record."

And Corzine's resources have a downside. As a northern New Jersey Republican official notes, "People are wise to the fact he comes out of the financial world. The financial world has pretty much destroyed our economic system, the world system." He says that the "wheeling and dealing" at Goldman Sachs that once provided Corzine with the air of financial prowess may prove a liability.

It is not hard to anticipate how the race will pan out. Larry J. Sabato explains, "The 2009 contest will be mainly a referendum on Corzine, one way or the other. Corzine will try to nationalize it and link Christie to an unpopular national GOP." In the end, it will come down to whether voters think Corzine deserves a second term or if Christie offers voters a better alternative and credible plan for repairing the state's dismal political and economic reputation.

But before Christie gets to Corzine he has to win the June primary, where he will face Steve Lonegan, the mayor of Bogota (population: 10,000), Morris County assemblyman Rick Merkt, and Franklin Township mayor Brian Levine. With three months to go before the June primary Christie is the clear frontrunner (leading his closest challenger by more than 20 points in recent polls) and the favorite of most national Republicans and a broad array of in-state politicians ranging from conservative representative Chris Smith to moderate ex-governor Tom Kean. Rudy Giuliani endorsed him—in front of Corzine's Hoboken home, in an act of political one-upmanship. Other national Republicans soon may follow suit. The Republican Governors Association remains "respectful" of the primary, says Ayers, but it offered Christie a platform at their gala Washington, D.C., dinner in February.

Winning the primary in New Jersey is to a large degree an exercise in retail politics. A candidate needs to line up the leadership and local activists of New Jersey's 21 county party organizations between now and April. Eighteen of these "award the line"—a preferential ballot placement atop the approved slate of candidates that is key to winning the primary vote. The "line" can be obtained in either an open party convention or simply at the whim of the county party chairman.

The first batch of these county endorsements, including Camden, Cape May, Union, Burlington, Passaic, and Monmouth counties, has gone to Christie, in large part because county chairmen and party regulars view him as the most viable candidate in November. His image as a no-nonsense prosecutor also resonates with local political leaders, says state chairman Wilson.

Bergen County chairman Robert Yudin and his county organization are also endorsing Christie. He explains his preference, "This is New Jersey. This is a Blue state. We need someone of Chris Christie's caliber and broad appeal to win in New Jersey. This isn't Texas." He argues that no Republican can win the state without Bergen and that Christie is best suited because his record on corruption stands to be highlighted when a group of politicians he indicted comes up for trial this year.

Joe Oxley, who heads the Monmouth Republicans, thinks Christie's combination of a "very, very successful record on public corruption" and solid retail political skills—"He has the ability to captivate a room"—gives the Republicans their best shot to knock out Corzine.

Of Christie's opponents, Lonegan is the best known and funded. In conversation, he lives up to his reputation as conservative firebrand, dubbing Corzine "the most left-wing socialist governor" in the state's history. Nor does he have much patience with New Jersey Republicans, branding the primary as a contest "between Trenton insiders and conservatives." Lonegan is attempting to run to the right of Christie, putting social issues front and center and turning up the rhetoric to appeal to the conservative base. His plans include a flat tax and a striking approach to urban reform. "The long term plan for the cities is to dismantle them," he says. He contends that people really want to live in "towns and villages." Rather than spending money on the cities, he thinks New Jersey should be "driving economic growth and jobs and giving people the opportunity to move out." So far it hasn't been a winning formula, in part because Christie has declared his pro-life views but also because he is proposing a conservative agenda on the issue that matters most to voters, the economy.

The results this November in both the New Jersey and Virginia gubernatorial races will be pored over by the pundits and political insiders. Christie contends his victory would "send a message across the country" that a "reform-minded" Republican can win in blue states. And for those straining to see the beginnings of a conservative revival wins in New Jersey and Virginia would rekindle memories of 1993 when victories by Christie Todd Whitman and George Allen preceded the Republicans' stunning recapture of Congress the following year. While that may be beyond even the most optimistic Republican dreams, knocking out a Democratic governor in New Jersey would be proof that the Republican party still has a pulse. And if Christie is the victor, a previously unknown prosecutor will be a knight in shining armor for a party badly in need of rescue. ♦

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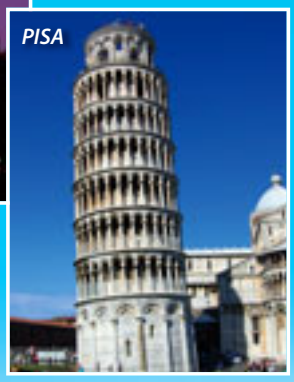

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Basking in the Financial Crisis

Naomi Klein, rising star of the kooky left

By Cathy Young

Move over, Michael Moore: The new rock star of the left has arrived. She is Naomi Klein, a 38-year-old Canadian writer and journalist whose 2007 book, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*, was greeted with rave reviews and became an international bestseller. She has been hailed by British political philosopher John Gray in the *Guardian* and by Nobel Prize-winning economist Joseph Stiglitz in the *New York Times*. In February, she became the first winner of England's new £50,000 Warwick Prize for Writing. A long, mostly flattering, though occasionally skeptical profile in the *New Yorker*, published in December, called her "the most visible and influential figure on the American left—what Howard Zinn and Noam Chomsky were thirty years ago."

Klein's basic message comes down to this: Capitalism is evil, countless crimes have been committed in its name, and much of the foreign policy of the United States and its allies in recent decades has been driven by the twin forces of greed and free-market fanaticism. Even some people sympathetic to Klein's critique of free-market economic doctrine, such as Stiglitz, concede that her analysis is oversimplified. Clearly, her many admirers are not deterred.

The thesis of *The Shock Doctrine* is that, since market-oriented, government-cutting reforms tend to be highly unpopular, they can only be imposed by coercion and stealth; the marketeers' tactic is to either take advantage of a terrible crisis (natural disaster or war) or help create one, the better to impose their agenda on the lost and confused masses. Klein deduces this nefarious strategy from an uncontroversial statement by the late Milton Friedman in the introduction to a reprint of his book *Capitalism and Freedom*: "Only a crisis—actual or perceived—produces real change." Throw in Friedman's later comment that Hurricane Katrina, albeit "a tragedy," was "also an opportunity" to rebuild New Orleans's dysfunctional school system with more focus on private and charter schools, and there you have it: Champions of laissez-faire are ghouls who feed on human suffering.

Everywhere Klein looks, from the war in Iraq to the downfall of communism to the 1973 military coup in Chile to the tsunami in Indonesia, she sees this sinister pattern. And she sees something even more sinister: a link between the free marketeers' use of mass shock to tear down faulty institutions and remake society, and bizarre CIA-funded experiments in the 1950s conducted by psychiatrist Ewen Cameron—nicknamed "Dr. Shock"—designed to "unmake and erase faulty minds" by electric or drug-induced shocks and then rebuild the patient's personality. The free-market reformer and the torturer are spiritual twins.

Yes, this really is as kooky as it sounds. Klein's argument frequently lapses from standard left-wing polemic into sheer weirdness. Thus, she finds it telling that Guantánamo Bay detainees scheduled for release were allowed time in a room where they could watch movies on DVD, eat pizza and hamburgers, and "chill out." In Klein's reading, "that was actually the plan"—break the prisoners down through abuse, then fill their emptied minds with American junk culture and junk food. On a grander scale, Klein suggests that the Bush administration deliberately fostered chaos in Iraq after the invasion, since a smooth transition to Iraqi self-government would have inhibited privatization and other free-market reforms in the service of world corporate dominance—never mind that Klein herself acknowledges the eventual abandonment of many free-market reforms in Iraq.

Klein's grasp of economics is tenuous at best. She thinks corporate welfare is consistent with Milton Friedman's doctrines. She declares, in all seriousness, that Chicago-school laissez-faire ideology is uniquely prone to breeding corruption because it praises greed and self-enrichment. (One has to wonder if Klein has heard of public choice theory, which holds that excessive government involvement in the econ-

Cathy Young is a contributing editor to Reason *magazine.*

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omy is bad precisely because, among other things, greedy officials are likely to promote regulations that serve their interests rather than the public good.)

Since its publication, *The Shock Doctrine* has been subjected to several withering critiques. Writing in the *New Republic* last July, senior editor Jonathan Chait, no fan of "absolutist free-market ideology," dismissed Klein's one-track polemic as "perfect nonsense." The most detailed analysis, by Swedish intellectual historian Johan Nordberg in a Cato Institute briefing paper, uncovers numerous inaccuracies and distortions in Klein's tome.

Thus, Klein seeks to link Friedman to the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet in Chile and to demonstrate that imposing Chicago School reforms was the real agenda behind the 1973 coup. But in making this argument, Nordberg shows, she fudges the fact that economic liberalization was initially opposed by the junta and began only several years later.

Particularly devastating is Nordberg's dissection of Klein's attempt to recast the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests in China as an anticapitalist uprising. In reality, the protesters' demands focused on political issues, particularly free speech; the participants included both supporters and opponents of market-oriented economic reform. Among Communist party elders, most of those who sent in the tanks to crush the peaceful demonstration opposed economic liberalization, which they blamed for the unrest—while the strongest supporter of market reforms, General Secretary Zhao Ziyang, was sympathetic to the protesters. (After the crackdown, Zhao was deposed and placed under house arrest.) While Klein portrays the Tiananmen massacre as a means of terrorizing the populace into submission to radical market reforms, Nordberg points out that reforms were actually stalled for several years afterwards.

Naomi Klein, the new Noam Chomsky

NEWSCOM

In September, Klein posted a response to her critics on her website—demonstrating in abundance the very sins that those critics have pointed out. Nordberg charges that Klein cherry-picks data to support her claim that free-market reforms cause impoverishment; in reply, Klein cites more cherry-picked data on unemployment and poverty in several countries in various years. Both Nordberg and Chait accuse Klein of lumping together her villains under the catch-all label "neoconservative." Klein retorts that she never applied this label to Friedman—and then goes on to quote a passage from her book that lumps together the Heritage Foundation, the American Enterprise Institute, and the Cato Institute as leaders of the "neoconservative" movement. Of course, Cato (where I hold an unpaid position as a research associate) is in no sense "neoconservative" and forcefully opposed the war in Iraq, which Klein sees as the ultimate application of "the shock doctrine."

Economist Anders Åslund of the Peterson Institute told me in an email exchange that Klein's "favorite trick is to take a brief quotation out of context and make it mean the opposite of what the writer or speaker meant"; and that, too, is on display in Klein's attempted self-defense. To back up her claim that NATO military action in the former Yugoslavia was intended primarily (you guessed it) to force the new nations of the Balkans to submit to Friedmanism, Klein calls as her witness former Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott. In a foreword to a 2005 book on the Balkan crisis, Talbott wrote, "As nations throughout the region sought to reform their economies, mitigate ethnic tensions, and broaden civil society, Belgrade seemed to delight in continually moving in the opposite direction. . . . It was Yugoslavia's resistance to the broader trends of political and economic reform—not the plight of the Kosovar Albanians—that best explains NATO's war."

If you're wondering how this proves Klein's point, the answer is that it doesn't. Obviously, Talbott is referring to the Milosevic regime's general rejection

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of Western values, among them ethnic diversity and political freedom; moreover, in the next paragraph he adds that "only a decade of death, destruction and Milosevic brinksmanship pushed NATO to act." Yet the mere mention of economic reform is enough to trigger Klein's monomania. Ironically, Talbott also points out that most leaders of NATO powers were not right-wing hawks but heads of "socially progressive, economically centrist governments"—an observation that reads like an eerily prescient rebuttal to Klein.

The Shock Doctrine's account of economic and political reform in Russia is a striking example of fuzzy facts and muddled thinking. In Klein's telling, nascent Russian democracy was sacrificed on the altar of the market—by Boris Yeltsin, when he shelled the rebellious Russian parliament to crush its, and the people's, resistance to his radical free-market reforms. Klein compares this event to Pinochet's coup.

There are a few things wrong with this narrative. First, at the time of the showdown with parliament in October 1993, Yeltsin was hardly a champion of radical economic reform: In December 1992, he had replaced his pro-market prime minister, Yegor Gaidar, with "centrist" Viktor Chernomyrdin, a career bureaucrat with strong links to the Soviet-era industrial sector who quickly began pumping money into moribund enterprises, causing hyperinflation.

As far as her own ideology goes, Klein repudiates 'authoritarian Communism'—always with that qualifier.

Second, as to suppressing democracy, most Russians in 1993 supported their elected president over the parliament. Klein dismisses as "a propaganda exercise" a nonbinding referendum earlier that year in which voters expressed confidence in Yeltsin. Yet polls after the October crisis found that a strong majority of Russians blamed the violence either on the parliamentary leaders or on Communist/nationalist extremists; half approved of Yeltsin's use of force to restore order, while fewer than a third disapproved. (Opinion would shift in later years as Yeltsin's popularity plummeted.)

Klein's chronicle of the conflict itself is riddled with errors and evasions. She glosses over the fact that violence was started not by Yeltsin but by the parliament's defenders—who, she admits, included "proto-fascist nationalists"—when they attempted to seize the Ostankino television tower. Her main source, Russian left-wing activist Boris Kagarlitsky, tells her that "some people in the crowd were armed, but most were not." Yet a recent article in the Russian weekly *New Times* by journalist Yevgenia Albats—who agrees that the shelling of the parliament was a tragic turning point for Russian democracy—speaks of "a crazed mob armed with machine guns and rifles." Klein cites as fact a death toll of 500, without mentioning that this estimate is based on rumor or that the official figure stands at about 150. And while she dramatically asserts that "following the coup, Russia was under unchecked dictatorial rule," she throws in only as an afterthought that "civil liberties were soon restored."

There is no question that economic reform under Yeltsin fell far short of success. But Klein's depiction of a country raped and pillaged by a gang of Friedman Mini-Me's is ludicrously off base. It is true that, after the events of October 1993, advocates of free-market reform were brought back into the government—briefly. The two leading reformers, Gaidar and Boris Fedorov, quit in January 1994, and Chernomyrdin—who declared, "Market romanticism is over"—was back in charge. Privatization and price liberalization notwithstanding, Russia in the 1990s was very far from having a market economy. Private ownership and sale of land remained heavily restricted. Business was strangled by cumbersome, byzantine taxes and regulations, corrupt bureaucracies, and lack of effective protection for property rights.

That Russians suffered much hardship during the early 1990s is also undisputed. Yet Klein's analysis consistently downplays the extent to which hardship predated reform. Thus, the drop in life expectancy began under communism—except for a small blip in the mid-1980s, linked to a crackdown on alcohol consumption. Homelessness, which Klein portrays as a post-Soviet phenomenon, was widely discussed in the newly liberated Soviet press with the advent of glasnost in the late 1980s.

Klein's ultimate proof of the misery caused by privatization is that the number of people below the official poverty line in the Russian Federation rose from 2 million in 1989 to 74 million in the mid-1990s. But Soviet poverty data are of dubious value—in fact, they were widely questioned by glasnost-era Soviet experts—while statistics from the Yeltsin years almost certainly missed a lot of unreported income. Nor does Klein mention the fact that by 1990, with the Soviet command economy in free fall, Russia was plagued by severe shortages; in the words of Russian satirist Viktor Shenderovich, "The Soviet regime still existed but the food had already run out." The market-based reforms, however painful, probably prevented a far worse collapse.

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Who is Naomi Klein? The *New Yorker* profile by Larissa MacFarquhar answers that question in unwittingly revealing ways. Klein is a second-generation red-diaper baby, the grandchild of American Communists who eventually underwent a bitter disillusionment. Her father was a Vietnam war protester who moved to Canada with his wife-to-be, an activist filmmaker, to avoid the draft; her mother later became part of a Canadian taxpayer-funded feminist film studio and made documentaries on left-wing causes.

In view of Klein's obsession with the idea that capitalism's evil gurus use trauma to force change on unwilling populations, it is perhaps ironic that her own change into an activist was precipitated by traumatic experiences. As a teenager, Klein rebelled against her hippie, toy-gun-banning parents. According to MacFarquhar, "two catastrophic events erased her animus toward her parents and their politics." First, when she was 17, her mother suffered a stroke that left her paralyzed for months. Then, in Klein's first year of college, her feminist consciousness was jolted awake when a woman-hating gunman shot 14 female engineering students in Montreal.

As far as her own ideology goes, Klein repudiates "authoritarian Communism," always with that qualifier. While she asserts that she is not against "all forms of market systems," just "fundamentalist" ones, her idea of non-fundamentalist markets includes not only free universal health care but "a large segment of the economy—such as a national oil company—held in state hands." Politically, she is of the hard left. In a recent article in the *Nation*, Klein urged a "boycott, divest, sanction" strategy toward Israel, similar to the measures against apartheid South Africa; she also revealed that she personally was boycotting Israel, having the Israeli edition of *The Shock Doctrine* published by a small press "deeply involved with the anti-occupation movement" and donating the proceeds to its work. (As author Ronald Radosh noted on his blog, Klein's position is not even one of moral equivalence between Israel and Hamas: She singles out Israel as the sole villain.) In the *New Yorker* profile, she faults her husband, fellow leftist Avi Klein, for being "too quick to reject revolutionary movements": "I don't fetishize guerrilla violence, but I think there are situations where people are justified in taking up arms."

Indeed, the vindication of the far left is the not-so-hidden agenda of *The Shock Doctrine*. Klein tells the left that its ideas did not fail with the fall of the Soviet Union and the apparent triumph of democratic capitalism but were defeated by trickery and force. She claims to be all in favor of accountability for the crimes of communism—but only as long as supporters of market capitalism are forced into a similar reckoning for crimes she regards as equal. And since the capitalists are unlikely to repent, the obvious conclusion is that the left need feel no shame over its past support for tyranny and mass murder: Its opponents, whether "neoconservative" or libertarian, are just as bad.

Not surprisingly, the left, from London (where Klein is a frequent contributor to the *Guardian*) to Hollywood, loves the message and the messenger. According to actor Tim Robbins, Klein's tome is "so revelatory . . . that it could very well prove a catalyst, a watershed, a tipping point in the movement for economic and social justice."

Could it? Paradoxically, the end of the Bush era may dim Klein's star, now that loathing of the administration is no longer a rallying point. Yet her "disaster polemics" (in Nordberg's apt phrase) could have considerable appeal at a time when conventional wisdom asserts that the economic crisis has turned the market into the new "God that failed." *The Shock Doctrine* is already showing up on syllabi, from a course on "The Neo-Colonial Present" at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst to an Advanced Placement high-school English class in the Dallas Independent School District. The demand for Klein as a speaker, on campuses and at such venues as the Commonwealth Club in San Francisco, has skyrocketed since the Wall Street crash—which, she proclaims, "should be for Friedmanism what the fall of the Berlin Wall was for authoritarian Communism, an indictment of an ideology."

That brings us to the final irony of Naomi Klein. The woman who accuses her free-market bogeymen of "pray[ing] for crisis the way drought-struck farmers pray for rain" and using other people's suffering for ideological and often financial gain, is basking in the present crisis as she trots the globe making speeches. "This is a progressive moment: It's ours to lose," she tells the *New Yorker*. (Apparently, the new progressive American president agrees—though Klein, who in the *New Yorker* dismisses Obama as just another status quo politician, undoubtedly finds his proposed expansion of the welfare state insufficiently audacious.)

Nor is this the first time Klein has delighted in misery-causing shocks to the system. The most "inspiring" political moment of her life, by her account to MacFarquhar, came in turmoil-stricken Buenos Aires in 2002. "They had thrown out four presidents in two weeks, and they had no idea what to do," Klein rhapsodized. "Every institution was in crisis. The politicians were hiding in their homes. When they came out, housewives attacked them with brooms." As Harvard political economist Dani Rodrik pointed out, these fond memories are of a time when Argentina experienced "more than a doubling of the share of population in extreme poverty."

Shock doctor, heal thyself. ♦

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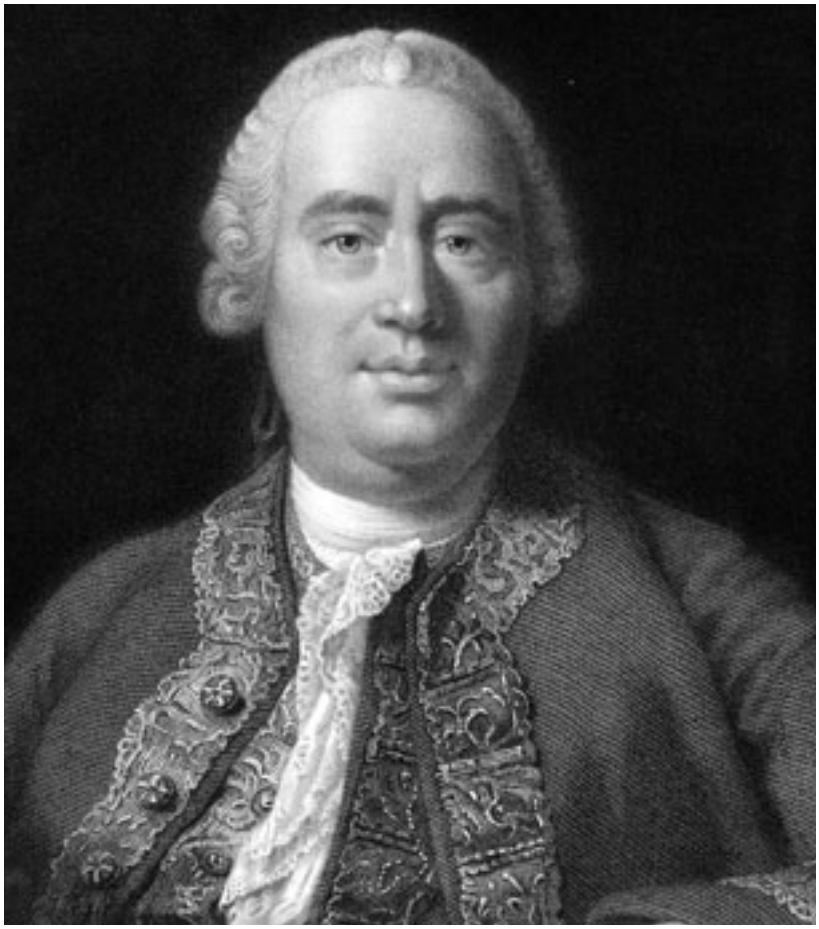

David Hume in 1776

Sense and Sensibility

No good deed of Hume's went unpunished by Rousseau.

BY GERTRUDE HIMMELFARB

"No man is a hero to his valet," the old adage goes. Nor to his biographer. And eminent men—poets, statesmen, or philosophers—are all the more vulnerable. Their personal lives may be seen as, at best, a distraction from whatever it is that makes them worthy of study.

The Philosophers' Quarrel, the account of a bizarre episode in the lives of Jean-Jacques Rousseau and David Hume, lends itself to this objection. Yet it raises interesting questions beyond the scope of the book, not only such obvious ones as how the term "Enlightenment" can be used to embrace two such antithetical philosophers and their philosophies, but more general questions about the relation between the personal and the public, between ideas as they are conceived and as they are received, between philosophy as the philosopher understands it and as the historian sees it unfolding in history. Short of such perennial and perhaps insoluble issues, *The Philosophers' Quarrel* may be read as an "entertainment"—as Graham Greene said of his thrillers to distinguish them from his more serious works—about two characters in a novel that might have been written by Tom Wolfe.

The Philosophers' Quarrel
Rousseau, Hume, and the Limits of Human Understanding
by Robert Zaretsky and John T. Scott
Yale, 264 pp., $27.50

The book opens with a memorable scene in London, on March 18, 1766, when the "quarrel" (a word that hardly does justice to that affair) erupted. Rousseau, a renowned exile from his own country (*Émile* had been pronounced heretical by the Archbishop of Paris), was living in England courtesy of Hume, who had escorted him from Paris three months earlier and had arranged accommodations for him in London. Now, Rousseau, tiring of London (another corrupt city, he decided, like Paris), was on his way, again through the efforts of Hume, to Wootton Hall, the estate of Hume's friend, Richard Davenport, in the north of England. He was spending the night in Hume's apartment when he realized that Davenport, wanting to spare him some of the expense of the trip, had secretly contributed to the coach fare.

Assuming that Hume knew of this subterfuge, Rousseau burst into the drawing room in a frenzy of indignation and outrage, accusing Hume of deceiving and humiliating him, treating him like a child or a "beggar on alms." Taken aback by the ferocity of the attack, Hume tried, in vain, to engage him in reasonable conversa-

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Gertrude Himmelfarb is the author of the forthcoming The Jewish Odyssey of George Eliot *(Encounter).*

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tion. Rousseau was implacable until, after almost an hour, he suddenly leaped into Hume's lap, threw his arms around his neck, and covered his face with tears and kisses.

"Is it possible you can ever forgive me, my dear friend?" cried Rousseau. "After all the testimonies of affection I have received from you, I reward you at last with this folly and ill behavior. But I have notwithstanding a heart worthy of your friendship. I love you, I esteem you; and not an instance of your kindness is thrown away upon me." Weeping and overwhelmed by this display of emotion, Hume reassured Rousseau of his love and friendship. "I think no scene of my life," Hume wrote to a friend shortly afterwards, "was ever more affecting."

These, it must be remembered, were not adolescents or protagonists in a rather absurd romantic novel but mature and celebrated men, indeed, leading lights of the Enlightenments in their respective countries. Nor was it a transient episode occasioned by a moment of misunderstanding and misplaced passion, for the "quarrel" went on and assumed much larger dimensions. Nor was it merely a familiar example of that wise maxim, "No good deed goes unpunished," although it was that as well.

The affair had its origins four years earlier when Hume, then living in Paris, heard of Rousseau's plight, thought he was in hiding in Paris (he had, in fact, fled to Switzerland), and offered to find a haven for him in England and a pension from the royal treasury. "Of all the men of letters in Europe, since the death of Montesquieu," Hume wrote him, "you are the person whom I most revere, both for the force of your genius and the greatness of your mind." Rousseau was flattered but politely declined Hume's offer. Three years later, finding himself unwelcome in Switzerland, he accepted it. He was to return to Paris secretly, where he would join Hume before making their way to London.

The two met on December 20, 1765, at the not-very-secret salon of the Countess of Conti. (The authorities turned a blind eye as Rousseau went to the opera, paraded in the Luxembourg Gardens in his peculiar dress—he had taken to wearing an Armenian-like caftan—and was publicly feted and celebrated.) Hume was also much taken with him. "I find him mild, and gentle and modest and good humoured," he reported, much like Socrates, both being "of very amorous complexions," although that too was "much to the advantage of my friend." Several weeks later in London, Hume used much the same words in writing to a French friend: Rousseau was "mild, gentle, modest, affectionate, disinterested, and above all endowed with a sensibility of heart in a supreme degree."

Jean-Jacques Rousseau in Switzerland

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'Mild," "gentle," "modest"—that hardly describes the Rousseau who, the following month, created that dramatic scene of denunciation and reconciliation. Hume might have been reminded of another letter he had written earlier: "The philosophers of Paris foretold to me that I could not conduct him to Calais without a quarrel; but I think I could live with him all my life in mutual friendship and esteem." Among those philosophers was Baron d'Holbach, who had warned him, on the eve of their departure from Paris: "You do not know your man. I tell you plainly that you are nursing a viper in your bosom."

Hume had occasion to recall those warnings in the months to come, for Rousseau's declarations of remorse and love proved to be short-lived. The quarrel escalated as Rousseau found more reason to accuse Hume of deceit and betrayal. As soon as he arrived at Wootton Hall, referring again to the subterfuge about the coach fare, Rousseau wrote him "to stop playing once and for all these small tricks from which no good can come." To friends in Paris, Rousseau reported on other "sinister" circumstances. Hume "tampered" with his mail by opening letters forwarded to him and not sending others. (Hume had forwarded only a sampling of the letters because Rousseau had complained of the cost of postage.) And Hume was one of the "abettors" in the publication of anonymous letters intended to dishonor him. (The satirical letters were actually written, and were known to have been written, by Horace Walpole and Voltaire, who needed no abetting from Hume to get them published.)

All this time, while Rousseau was berating him personally and reviling him to others, Hume was negotiating, finally successfully, for the royal pension. Rousseau at first accepted it and then, after the Walpole incident, rejected it. What might have been a letter of thanks to Hume was a bitter denunciation. Hume had brought him to England, Rousseau complained, ostensibly to give him asylum, but really to "dishonor" him: "The public loves to be deceived, and you are made to deceive it." Rousseau was reminded of what he had said to Hume during that emotional

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scene in London: "If you were not the best of men, you must be the blackest." In view of his "secret conduct," Hume must now realize that he was not, indeed, "the best of men"—hence "the blackest." The letter concluded with Rousseau's refusal to have any further contact with Hume or "accept any affair in which you are a mediator, even if it is to my advantage."

Bewildered and hurt, Hume replied by professing his "unbounded and uninterrupted" friendship for Rousseau and asking to be told the name of the person who had been maligning him so that he could prove his innocence. Rousseau did write again, in spite of his earlier promise not to do so. That letter—38 folio pages (17 printed pages), carefully written and composed (it went through several heavily revised drafts)—was an even harsher indictment of Hume and, not incidentally, an impassioned testimonial to himself.

Hume had asserted his innocence, but it was Rousseau who portrayed himself as the true innocent. He did not "live in the world," he told Hume, and was ignorant of what went on in it. "I know only what I feel," and in presenting his case against Hume, "I will present the history of the movements of my soul." As in a judicial case, he proposed to speak of Hume in the third person, except that in this case Hume was to be not so much the defendant as the judge against himself.

Hume had asked for the name of his accuser, but the only accuser, Rousseau told him, was Hume himself. In addition to the earlier charges—the private letters opened or not sent, the mere "appearance" of arranging the pension, the "plot" of those anonymous public letters—Rousseau now added other items to his indictment. A portrait of Rousseau Hume had commissioned was "hideous" (especially compared with that of Hume himself); the copy of *Julie* he had put in Rousseau's London lodgings was, of all his books, "the most tiresome to him"; a theater engagement Hume had arranged (which Rousseau clearly enjoyed, basking in the presence of the King) forced him to miss an appointment with a librarian in the British Museum; and it was because of the machinations of Hume that the English press, which had been initially favorable to him, turned against him. Rousseau also recalled their final meeting in London, when Hume had fixed upon him a "steadfast piercing look, mixed with a sneer," which induced in him "the most inexpressible terror," and was relieved only by "an effusion of tears." "No, no," he remembered saying as he embraced Hume, "David Hume cannot be treacherous. If he be not the best of men, he must be the basest of mankind." To which Hume had responded only with the politest and briefest assertions of innocence.

Adam Smith

Even more disturbing was the memory of the four words Hume had uttered when they shared a room one night in an inn on their journey from Paris to London. Rousseau could not tell whether Hume was awake or asleep when he said, "*Je tiens J.J. Rousseau*"—"I have you, Rousseau." "Not a night indeed passes over my head," Rousseau now wrote, "but I think I hear, 'Rousseau, I have you,' ring in my ears as if he had just pronounced them." Rousseau concluded by challenging Hume to prove his innocence, or not write him again.

In his reply, Hume also recalled that last meeting, especially Rousseau's begging his forgiveness for having so misunderstood his acts of friendship. "The story as I tell it," Hume protested, "is consistent and rational. There is not common sense in your account." Everything he had done was meant to provide for Rousseau's "repose, honor, and fortune," and he regretted that it had all been turned against him. In the margins of Rousseau's letter, he was more specific, noting, after each charge of the indictment, the word "lie," making for a total of a dozen lies. About those four damning words he presumably uttered, awake or asleep, he commented that Rousseau himself did not know whether he was awake or asleep when he heard them. (Hume might also have pointed out that an Englishman, whether awake or asleep, would not be likely to be speaking in French.)

"Adieu, and forever," Hume had concluded his letter. But it was not quite "adieu," because he continued to pursue the matter of the royal pension. In April the following year Rousseau finally, grudgingly, accepted it. By then, however, the matter was moot, because Rousseau and his mistress Thérèse fled from Wootton Hall after her quarrels with the servants had made life there intolerable—and fled from England as well.

So far, these events might have remained private, awaiting perhaps the discovery of their letters in an obscure archive by an enterprising historian. (Hume had sent them to the British Museum, which did not, however, accept them.) In fact, the letters were circulated by the protagonists themselves among their friends—and thus their friends' friends. Rousseau, vowing to keep silent about the "universal plot," the powerful and skillful "league" that had formed against him, sent his last, long letter to his publisher, asking him to show it to others. Hume, suspecting that the letter would be published as a two-shillings pamphlet, and that the affair would feature

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prominently in the memoir Rousseau was known to be writing, sent the whole correspondence to d'Alembert to publish if he saw fit. (It does not, in fact, appear in Rousseau's *Confessions*, which was published posthumously and stops short of this period.)

Some of Hume's friends, including Adam Smith who dismissed Rousseau as a "rascal," counseled against publication, but d'Alembert, learning that Rousseau's letter was in possession of his publisher, persuaded Hume that the entire correspondence should be published. The book appeared in France in October 1766, and in England the following month, under the title *A Concise and Genuine Account of the Dispute Between Mr. Hume and Mr. Rousseau*. The "dispute" thus became something of a *cause célèbre* in both countries, not only among the literati, who knew the disputants personally, but among readers and reviewers of that "Concise and Genuine Account."

The devil is in the details. No abridgment of this affair, no paraphrase of quotations from the letters, can do justice to it. Writing to Davenport the day he received Rousseau's letter, Hume described it as "a perfect frenzy" and worried that his poor friend might find himself "shut up altogether in Bedlam." Voltaire, reading the published account, wrote an open letter to Hume describing Rousseau as "completely mad"—mad in his conduct towards his benefactor, but also mad in his writings, which were those of "an empty ranter spun out in an often unintelligible prose." A modern reader might prefer the word "paranoid." The authors of *The Philosophers' Quarrel* are more judicious; they only report on the responses of others. And those responses are almost as curious as the affair itself.

Apart from the *philosophes* who had good reason to think of Rousseau as their enemy, popular opinion in France was overwhelmingly in his favor. This was the author of the bestselling novel of the era, *Julie ou la nouvelle Héloise*—a man of "sensibility," of "candor, integrity, and sensitivity," in contrast to the insensitive and obtuse Englishman. More surprising was the fact that so many Englishmen shared this view, like the reader who rebuked Hume for not appreciating the "extreme sensibility" with which Rousseau responded to his extreme difficulties, or the fellow Scotsman, writing as "A Friend to Rousseau," who recommended his country (and Hume's) as a fitting home for that "illustrious exile."

Rousseau himself made this identification with *Julie* explicit when he explained that in his letter to Hume he would do what he had done in *Julie*. He would write only about his feelings because he knew only what he felt. His feelings, the movements of his "soul," were his warrant of truth. It is also interesting that he should speak of the *Julie* "letters" (the novel was written in the form of letters) as if they were on a par with the Hume letter, the fictional letters having a sincerity and authenticity lacking in the unfeeling prose of Hume.

In their charges and countercharges, they gave meaning and legitimacy—moral and philosophical legitimacy—to what might otherwise have been dismissed as eccentricity or perversity. Paranoia may just be paranoia. But sometimes, just sometimes, it may be something else as well.

The public response to this affair suggests that it was more than a falling-out between two people who happened to be eminent philosophers, although this would have been intriguing enough. What made it more provocative for their contemporaries was the impression that something more was at stake, that the quarrel reflected two very different philosophies, or at least philosophical temperaments that lent themselves to distinctive philosophies. No one argued about the details of the case: Hume's deception about the coach fare to Wootton Hall, or his complicity in the publication of Walpole's or Voltaire's letters, or his ill-will in holding back some of the letters from admirers, or his "horrifying stare" at their last meeting. To the partisans on both sides, the issue was simple: It was a conflict between heart and mind, feeling and reason, sensibility and common sense—between, as one Frenchman put, the creator of *Julie* and the historian of England.

A philosopher today, who takes both men seriously as philosophers, may dismiss this quarrel as of no importance, a blip in the personal lives of all-too-human men. But to a historian of ideas it may have a larger importance. In any case, it is not the historian who is intruding on their personal lives, making public what should have been private. It is they themselves who brought this affair into the public arena, making it part not only of the historical record but also of the philosophical record. In their charges and countercharges, they gave meaning and legitimacy—moral and philosophical legitimacy—to what might otherwise have been dismissed as eccentricity or perversity. Paranoia may be just paranoia. But sometimes, just sometimes, it may be something else as well. "The personal is political," we have been told of late. By the same token, the personal may be philosophical.

Early in the book, the authors confront the question of the Enlightenment. How can such disparate figures as Rousseau and Hume be comprehended within that singular term? After some agonizing, they dispose of the problem by retaining the term. It is, they decide, "easier to live with the Enlightenment than without it"; as the legacy we live with and as the conceptual framework for scholars, "the Enlightenment is indispensable." Well, perhaps not. A historian, and a philosopher as well,

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may conclude *The Philosophers' Quarrel* by appreciating, more than ever, the multiplicity of "Enlightenments" and even "anti-Enlightenments" lurking within that term, the romanticism inspired by a Rousseauean cult of sensibility coexisting uneasily with the rationalism of the *philosophes* and the skeptical empiricism of Hume.

A historian may also recognize the ambiguities of Rousseau himself—the author of *Julie* who was also the author of *The Social Contract*. It was the latter Rousseau who emerged into prominence in the French Revolution—the philosopher to whom statues were erected throughout Paris, whose bust was installed in the Assembly Hall, whose body was transferred to the Pantheon together with a copy of *The Social Contract* resting on a velvet cushion, and to whom Robespierre paid homage when he ushered in the Reign of Terror (the official name of the new regime) which would realize the "general will" and bring about a complete "regeneration" of man.

This was the Rousseau that Edmund Burke, anticipating the Terror, saw as the evil genius of the Revolution. Burke also saw the relationship between Rousseau the man and Rousseau the philosopher. Reading Rousseau's admission in the *Confessions* that he had fathered five children, each of whom he had promptly turned over to the foundling hospital, Burke was moved to decry the philosopher who was so wanting in natural parental affection while professing the most exalted ideals. "Benevolence to the whole species, and want of feeling for every individual," "a lover of his kind, but a hatred of his kindred"—this, Burke said, was the "philosophic instructor," the "moral hero" of the Revolution, who counseled the "regeneration" of man while sacrificing the real man, the human being.

It is this Rousseau, the historic Rousseau, who created not only a culture of sensibility but also a philosophy of sensibility, and, more momentously, a politics of sensibility. And it is this Rousseau who remains a challenge to philosophers and historians today, as he was to critics and admirers in his own day. ♦

Verse Choice

Is a 'modern hermit' the best poet for laureate?

BY ELI LEHRER

Kay Ryan writes fine, thoughtful, accessible poetry. A master of emotional juxtapositions, clever shifts, and genuine insight, Ryan has earned her place among the better American poets writing today. Although her work didn't find a major publisher until 1997, and although she still makes a living teaching at a community college, Ryan's skill has earned her the ($100,000) Ruth Lilly Poetry Prize and an appointment as Poet Laureate (Consultant in Poetry) to the Library of Congress. She'll hold that position through May.

The Niagara River
by Kay Ryan
Grove, 97 pp., $14

Kay Ryan

AP PHOTO / STEVE YEATER

In her newest collection, Ryan offers short, stimulating, well-crafted poems. Almost always, her poems do exactly what good poetry does: condense emotion and thought in resonant, metrical, surprising language. The title poem, for example, begins with a simple metaphor comparing home life to a river, and then follows it with the insight that *We / do know, we do / know this is the / Niagara River, but / it is hard to remember / what that means*. Sometimes her work requires real thought. One of the best poems here, "Repulsive Theory," shifts from a discussion of physical magnetism to geography and then back to emotion, with Ryan calling on readers to *Praise . . . the whole / swirl set up by fending off* and concluding that *unpressing us against / each other* lends *the necessary* never / *to never-ending*.

It takes a few readings to follow all her leaps, but she certainly provides the necessary intellectual rewards for readers who do. Yet even when she lacks for emotional insight—yes, a hailstorm is *hard to believe / once it's past*—Ryan still offers good images. In "Hailstorm" she nicely describes *the little white planets* / [that] *layer and relayer / as they whip around*. The alliteration of white/whip and the repetition of layer/relayer gives a sense of the hailstorm's relentlessness.

For all her genuine skill, however, does Ryan really qualify to be poet laureate? The Library of Congress has appointed poetry consultants almost continuously since 1937. (The position went on hiatus for four years between 1952 and 1956 after William Carlos Williams enraged just about every literary figure in the country, lost the job, and checked himself into a mental hospital.) In 1985 Congress added the words "Poet Laureate" to the consultant's title, but did nothing to change the job itself. A private endowment funds the position's $35,000 stipend for an October-May stint, and American poet laureates—unlike those in Canada, England, and Scotland—aren't expected to produce verse for state occasions—or, indeed, have any particular responsibilities at all. The job is what

Eli Lehrer is a senior fellow at the Competitive Enterprise Institute.

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its holders make of it: Recent laureates have handed out poetry at train stations (Joseph Brodsky), taught at elementary schools (Gwendolyn Brooks), and organized conferences (Robert Haas).

Moreover, ever since Williams's time, the Library of Congress has played it safe. The great majority of poet laureates get the appointment after winning the Pulitzer or some other major award. Poets like the smart, profane A.R. Ammons and the hard-drinking Charles Bukowski never got the call, while intellectually slight but accessible metrical stylists like Ted Kooser did.

Ultimately, the perch has become little more than a government-sanctioned award for distinguished poets who don't arouse too much controversy or confuse too many readers. The brilliant but mind-numbingly difficult John Ashbery probably won't ever get the appointment, and by virtue of her strident leftist (but hardly radical) political verse, it's unlikely that a poet as fine, perceptive, and popular as Mary Oliver will, either.

Stated simply, the laureate's perch is a sinecure with little real purpose, and asking the laureate to turn out verse for state occasions wouldn't make things better. While a few laureates—Richard Wilbur (who wrote probing, inspiring lyrics about the Statue of Liberty) and Anthony Hecht (who wrote movingly about World War II)—have produced poetry that common readers might admire, most have not. And some of the better stylists to hold the job—Stanley Kunitz, for example—have produced excellent poetry that gently questions key American assumptions and values. It would be unfair to rule them out of consideration, and equally unfair to ask them to churn out celebratory lyrics.

Rather than the current free-form job description, the poet laureate might benefit from a clear mission of promoting public reading and listening. More Americans write poetry than read it, and a strong, single voice with a national platform could, conceivably, bring more poetry into American daily life. The laureate should also serve a continuous 24-month term—that is, long enough to undertake major projects—and earn a larger stipend. Those who take to the position with vigor—Haas and Rita Dove are good recent examples—might also qualify for a second consecutive term.

Kay Ryan has shown up at public readings, read from her own work a few times, announced plans for a "best of" collection, and done little else. Since she describes herself as a "modern hermit," such behavior isn't surprising; but hermits usually don't make good salesmen. If we want a poet laureate worthy of the title, Congress ought to think of the post a little expansively, broaden its reach, and give the American people a true national poet. ♦

God's Polaroid

Sometimes a thousand words are worth more than a picture. **BY KATHERINE EASTLAND**

PHOTOS FROM THE BOOK: BIBLE ILLUMINATED

Over dinner in Stockholm, a few ad executives wonder why the classics aren't read anymore. Maybe, they surmise, it's because readers *do* judge books by their covers, and the classics—often published as pictureless books crammed with little black type—simply don't appeal to the average reader, who prefers to trade in images more than in text, especially when the text is centuries old. So the ad men ask a second question: What if the classics ditched their dull look and became, well, fashionable?

Bible Illuminated
The Book, New Testament
Illuminated World, 261 pp., $35

A man at that table was Dag Söderberg, founder and former CEO of one of the largest advertising firms in Europe, and as a result of that talk, he founded a new company, Förlaget Illuminated (now called Illuminated World), for the purpose of reviving, or "illuminating," the classics.

Söderberg began his grand experiment a year ago with a cornerstone

Katherine Eastland is an assistant editor at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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classic: the Bible. He published it in two volumes, one per testament, in the format of a glossy fashion magazine, and it looks like a slimmer, adless version of *Vogue* crossed with *National Geographic*. On one page there's cat-eyed Angelina Jolie and on the next page there's an Indian woman giving birth. Every iota of Bible text is published, but it's the photographs—edgy, aggressive, graceful, at times political—that dominate.

Söderberg's experiment has worked splendidly. Before *Bible Illuminated: The Book* came on the scene, only 60,000 Bibles were sold in Sweden every year. (In America, by conservative estimates, the figure is 25 million.) Before reaching booksellers, Söderberg's Bibles were sold in unconventional places like beauty salons and museum shops. Between the two testaments, *Bible Illuminated* sold 30,000 copies in its first year, thereby increasing the Swedish Bible market by 50 percent. And to herald its debut, Illuminated World held an outdoor exhibition of photographs from *Bible Illuminated*. Ten percent of Stockholm's population visited. More than 700 articles reported *Bible Illuminated*'s story, as did radio and TV. The best indicator of *Bible Illuminated*'s success? It got more press than a new Volvo model.

Indeed, *Bible Illuminated* did so well in Sweden that Illuminated World decided to publish it elsewhere—and looked first to the capital of the Good Book business, America. Our country is home to hundreds of English translations of the Bible, a small army of door-to-door Bible salesmen, nine major Christian publishing houses, and thousands of specialty Bibles, including a small crop of magazine/Bible hybrids called, fittingly, "Biblezines." (The Swedes say that when they first thought of illuminating the Bible they hadn't heard of American Biblezines, the first of which—*Revolve*, for teenage girls, published by Thomas Nelson—came out in 2003.)

The Bible business is one of the few that will flourish in America despite a steep downturn in the economy, for as a rule, Bible sales peak in wartime and in economic crises. Not surprisingly, Bible sales have been on a steady rise

across the country since September 11, 2001. It's the book everyone already owns—the average American household has four copies—but that doesn't keep people from buying a fifth, or sixth, or twentieth copy.

Bible Illuminated stands apart from most Bibles because it's published without the hope of persuading a reader of the verities of Christianity. *Revolve*, by contrast, encourages teen girls to pray, to have a relationship with Jesus, to think of their sins being washed away as they scrub deodorant marks from their little black dresses. *Bible Illuminated*, as its website proclaims, does not "support a specific faith," and Söderberg—a self-described "spiritual but not particularly religious man"—says that he made *Bible Illuminated* to reacquaint "today's reader with one of the most important historical and cultural texts." By this logic, the Bible—and any other sacred text he might "illuminate" into a magazine—exists on the same (man-made) plane as the collected works of Homer, Ovid, Chaucer, Dante, and Shakespeare.

When I asked Larry Norton, U.S. president of Illuminated World, about the company's plans for the future, he talked about publishing not just the Bible in other countries—Spain and South Korea have expressed interest—but other books as well: "Picture a Shakespeare Illuminated, a Koran Illuminated, a Greeks Illuminated." In that respect Söderberg isn't too far removed from Albert Lewis Kanter, who recast such titles as *Moby-Dick* and *Don Quixote* in comic book formats for kids in the 1940s and '50s. But what Illuminated World does have in common with most Bible publishers is the desire to get the Bible read, especially by the unchurched-but-curious 18-to-35-year-old crowd. To that end, Illuminated World has modeled every detail of *Bible Illuminated* to attract that particular niche of readers and, in so doing, meet them precisely where they are: namely, in pop culture.

Pictures of contemporary people and events, the medium of the magazine itself, and the colloquial translation inform the way a reader approaches the text. Accordingly, the translation used here is the Good News transla-

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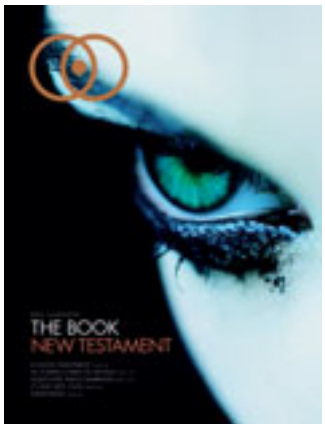
tion, which the American Bible Society crafted and first published in 1966 in what's largely regarded as the original niche Bible, *Good News for Modern Man*. (Its target audience was similar to *Bible Illuminated*'s market: disaffected youths who haven't given up on the Good Book just yet.) The translation is notable for being the first to translate the Greek and Hebrew according to the principles of functional, rather than formal, equivalence, rendering verses "thought for thought" instead of "word for word." The result is a colloquial, easy-to-read translation that mimics the way we speak, and not the judgment of King James's committee of scholars. The Good News translation was so popular that, in 20 years, it eclipsed the King James in Bible sales.

Since the Good News translation is a proprietary text of the American Bible Society, Illuminated World had to obtain permission to publish it. Dr. Philip Towner, dean of the society's scholarly arm, the Nida Institute, says that although Illuminated World doesn't view Scripture as they do—as the sacred Word of God—it does want to "draw out the contemporary relevance of Scripture" and "present [the Bible] in those types of format and levels of language that will assure understanding." No matter how the text is dressed, or for what reason it's published, Towner believes that "the story speaks for itself."

The society's licensing agreement, however, stipulates that the society can, as Towner puts it, "exert quality assurance control" so that the text "would be presented in a way that we regard as appropriate and according to our guidelines." For instance, the text can't be marked up or published in snippets, as Thomas Jefferson famously did—much to the chagrin of Elias Boudinot, first president of the American Bible Society—when, fashioning his own New Testament (in print today under the title *The Jefferson Bible*), he used his scissors to cut out stories relating the miracles of Jesus. Moreover, the society was quick to approve the company's wish to present the text without chapter and verse notations, for, as Towner notes, doing so would echo the "Greek text in the first century."



The more delicate matter, says Towner, was "the business of photos, captions, and pull quotes" since "once you bring the visual alongside the traditional, written text, all kinds of things can happen."

When drafting *Bible Illuminated* in Sweden, Illuminated World worked alongside the Swedish Bible Society, which subsists (along with the American Bible Society) under the global umbrella of the United Bible Societies. When work began on the American version, there was a precedent for defining a suitable relationship between photography and Scripture: All the verses "illuminated" with pictures are visually set apart from the text columns; they're highlighted in blocks of yellow, printed in red, or repeated in pull quotes. That way, readers can easily spot those verses, read them, consider surrounding verses—and so on. In this kind of ripple-effect reading, photos are intended to be like windows directing the reader past themselves and into Scripture. They also direct where reading is to begin.

It would be a mistake to say that the images are ancillary, or mere props to the text. These are not illustrations but "illuminations." While a Bible illustration has a precise, direct relationship to the verse it elucidates, an "illumination" relates to its verse just enough to have a foothold in it. The images aren't supposed to make immediate sense; if they did, why would any reader look at them for more than an instant? (In Exodus, after all, God caught Moses' attention with something new and strange: a burning bush whose leaves were not consumed.)

To attract readers' attention, many images here depict recent and recognizable people and events. Photographs of New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina are woven into Revelation (which opens with a sensationalist image of a man on fire), as is a picture of a man's hand gripping an overflowing gas pump, next to which runs this verse: "The whole earth was amazed and followed the beast." Likewise, the genealogy of Christ, as recorded in Matthew, is accompanied by an ultrasound image of a 25-week-old baby identified as having 47 chromosomes,

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and thus likely to have Down syndrome. John, the most philosophical book in the gospel quartet, has no color at all; images are in black and white only, and many are delicate—women's backs, swans, underwear folded over unbuckled velvet shoes, reeds.

Yet the images in *Bible Illuminated* are so large, so prevalent, so dramatic and strange that they risk dwarfing the text. Further, having images connected to verses naturally means that some verses get read more than others. Which means that, in this revamped Bible, the natural autonomy of the book is replaced and undermined by the prejudices of the *Bible Illuminated* editors, who decide which verses to illuminate and how. And while the images are there to catch the reader's gaze, they may distort (perhaps destroy) his effort to understand Scripture.

One of the most conspicuous sections of *Bible Illuminated* is a photo essay in Mark, which starts with a picture of Muhammad Ali warming up in his red boxing gloves. Next to him is a verse mentioning John the Baptist: "God said, 'I will send my messenger ahead of you to open the way for you.'" What follows is a photo essay beginning with a somber picture of Nelson Mandela gazing skyward. Turn the page and there are portraits of Martin Luther King, Gandhi, Ayaan Hirsi Ali, Bono, Mother Teresa, Angelina Jolie, Che Guevara, Princess Diana, Al Gore, and John Lennon—among others. At the end their names are listed alongside their deeds. The message is loud and clear and, in fact, echoes Barack Obama: It doesn't matter who you say Christ is, savior or prophet or teacher; what matters is whether you love your neighbor as yourself and demonstrate that love, especially for "the least of these."

"Some people don't like that there aren't all Christians in the book," says Larry Norton. (In fact, that's a reason why several chain family Bible stores won't sell *Bible Illuminated*.) "But these people in the broadest sense are doing good," he continues, "and we just want people to meditate on that." So while *Bible Illuminated* may not "support a specific faith" it does uphold a straightforward gospel of amplified action—that is to say, the Second Great Commandment without the First. This gospel is articulated further in Luke, which contains the only significant extra-biblical text in *Bible Illuminated*: a section entitled "Eight Ways to Change the World," a spinoff of the eight Millenium Development Goals drafted by the United Nations in 2000. The goals include universal primary education and the eradication of extreme poverty and world hunger, and they're supposed to be met by 2015.

At the close of "Eight Ways" there's a special exhortation to the reader, "This Is Where You Come In," which says, in part:

> We are not asking you to give us all your money, to wear a hair shirt, or to stop eating ice cream. We ask only that when you leave, you make a pledge to do one thing, just one thing—to help make the world a better and fairer place. Remember—every action, no matter how small, will create a tide that will help to change the world.

People of any faith, or of no faith, can agree that doing good is good, but they won't agree on God's name or whether He exists. *Bible Illuminated* seeks to find the common denominator most pleasing to most people. This is grounded in agreeable actions ("Eight Ways to Change the World"), not in exclusive beliefs, in "deeds, not creeds." It's probably no accident that the only image that directly speaks about salvation is an Andy Warhol silkscreen that declares, "Repent and Sin No More!" Nor is there much reference to sin and souls (outside the New Testament text itself) in *Bible Illuminated*. It's the Good Book made by and for people not of the Book, who would rather trade in deeds than in creeds, and in images more than in words. Anyway, talk of potential salvation or damnation is not what most people expect from a coffee table book. ♦

Model Citizen

A Brazilian named Bündchen puts her homeland on the map. **BY PIA CATTON**

The marriage of Gisele Bündchen and Tom Brady may look like an even celebrity match: two beautiful, talented millionaires who will be photographed in good times and bad, till death (or the ill effects of mega-fame) do them part. But in terms of cultural relevance, she is by far the bigger star.

It's not that Tom Brady is a couch potato. The elite quarterback was named football's MVP in 2007 and holds the league record for most touchdown passes in a season. He's gone to the Super Bowl four times, and won three times. Not only that, he was an early phenom: Brady is the only quarterback to start and win three Super Bowls before his 28th birthday.

But for all his various records and laurels, Tom Brady is one of hundreds of professional football players on 32 teams. If he were out of the game (as he was at the end of the 2008 season with a knee injury) New England would weep while Peyton Manning enjoyed the undisputed spotlight. Gisele, on the other hand, is a symbol of an entire nation—and it's not just because of her outrageously perfect body. More than a pin-up, she is a cultural icon, a positive figure from a country with more resources than respect, more potential than potency. Her success blossomed at the same time as Brazilian fashion, and that

Pia Catton is a writer in New York.

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combination has influenced the aspirations of the next generation.

"It's become part of the culture," says Maria Prata, fashion editor of *Vogue Brazil*. "Before Gisele, little girls wanted to be singers."

In January I found myself at fashion weeks in Rio and São Paulo, a guest of the Brazilian Textile and Apparel Industry Association (ABIT). Gisele walked in one São Paulo show—for the Brazilian denim brand Colcci, which is roughly equivalent to Diesel—and within seconds of her first step on the runway the crowd of a thousand burst into applause, then quickly hushed as everyone positioned their digital cameras.

Colcci likely spent more than a million dollars on their celebrity model; Victoria's Secret paid her $5 million a year for its runway shows and campaign. Walking the runway is rare for top models because the real money is made on advertising campaigns or endorsement deals. Gisele has plenty: This spring she is in campaigns for Dior and Versace, as well as Rampage and Stefanel. According to the *Forbes* annual celebrity rankings, Gisele earned $35 million in 2007, topping Heidi Klum ($14 million) and Kate Moss ($7.5 million). In her editorial work she has enjoyed seemingly endless popularity; She's been on the cover of *Vogue* 10 times, in almost as many years.

Central to Gisele Bündchen's importance is that she is the first Brazilian model to make it to this stratosphere of fame: "No one ever managed to gather the portfolio, the timing, and the grip of Gisele," says editor André do Val of the publishing collective House of Palomino. Timing mattered. Born in 1980, she was discovered by the Elite Modeling agency at 14 and moved to New York in 1997, a time when popular culture was ready for some way out of its gloomy Kate Moss/Nirvana phase. The Brazilian beauty broke the spell: *Vogue* heralded "the return of the sexy model" with Gisele on its July 1999 cover.

DIMITRIOS KAMBOURIS / WIREIMAGE

Mr. and Mrs. Tom Brady, 2008

"She got the world's attention at the end of the heroin chic trend," says do Val. "She was a symbol of good health and fitness. And that brought a lot of attention to Brazil, following this image of natural, uncompromised beauty."

Gisele Bündchen's star was also rising around the same time that the Brazilian fashion industry was getting its act together. Ten years ago its denim brands were scratching the surface of distribution. Today, Brazil is the second largest exporter of denim (after China). A decade ago Havaianas flip-flops were sold mainly in local grocery stores; today, the brand has achieved total domination. If you don't have Havaianas you are not cool, and you should not leave your house until you buy a pair.

So while the multitudes began to clamor for Brazilian stuff, they also embraced (or wished to embrace) the most beautiful girl from Brazil. "She has a fresh and natural look," says Chico Lowndes, who recently curated a São Paulo exhibit of photography by Rankin. "She's Brazilian, and that's something that looms in the world's imagination—'The Girl from Ipanema.'"

For the most part, she has a hard-working, fly-right image and stays out of the limelight unless she's paid to be there. The tabloids loved her romance with Leonardo DiCaprio, but if not for enterprising paparazzi her personal life would be reasonably private. Ah, but we'll always have Paris. In February 2007, while Gisele and Tom were enjoying a weekend in the City of Light, his former squeeze Bridget Moynahan announced, via Liz Smith's gossip column, that she was three months pregnant.

The New England Patriots quarterback likely has a few good years left on the job, and he has just married an international superstar who outshines and outclasses him. If ever a man married up, it's Tom Brady. ♦

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Blockbusted

Hollywood perfects the formula for failure.

BY JOHN PODHORETZ

If the moviegoing story of the first two months of 2009 was the surprise success of the comedy *Paul Blart: Mall Cop* and the violent action picture *Taken*, the story of March 2009 is the relative failure of the year's first major release, *Watchmen*. A dark-complected comic-book saga, *Watchmen* opened on a Friday to huge box-office numbers—and then immediately entered a slow death spiral. It earned $20 million less than its studio had hoped its first weekend, and the next, its box-office take plunged by a vertiginous 67 percent.

Watchmen
Directed by Zack Snyder

These numbers indicate that the hordes of boys who dropped everything to see it on opening day exited the theater with a distinct lack of enthusiasm, and transmitted that lack to others in their age cohort, which meant that the male youth spending dollar in March was stuffed back in the pocket of the baggy jeans in favor of yet another ripping round of *Guitar Hero* or *Resident Evil 5* down in the basement.

Everything should have gone right with *Watchmen*. But nothing did, really, and the cause of the failure is written into the movie's DNA.

Watchmen is based on a 1985 comic-book series whose explicit design was to rip the pseudo-heroic mask off the superhero and reveal the monster beneath. The superheroes are not heroes at all but chess pieces in a geopolitical game they do not understand. They are manipulated by, among other people, a president-for-life named Richard Nixon, who tricks them into doing horrific things in the mistaken belief that they are doing good.

John Podhoretz, editor of Commentary, *is* The Weekly Standard*'s movie critic.*

The *Watchmen* series is said to be a masterpiece by those who think the words "comic book" and "masterpiece" can be used justifiably in relation to one another. It does seem to have been a landmark of a kind. And based on a quick perusal and my viewing of this movie, it was a classic—a classic in the annals of commie claptrap. What is more, *Watchmen* is one of the most dated pop-culture works imaginable, as the following summary (spoiler alert, should you be foolish enough to waste two hours and 40 minutes of your life on this thing) will reveal:

Both comic and movie conclude with one seemingly evil superhero named Ozymandias (*un peu* pretentious, *non*?) arranging for the destruction of 25 million American lives and pinning the blame on another superhero named Dr. Manhattan. Only it turns out that the massive death Ozymandias inflicts is entirely justified because it instantly brings about peace with the Soviet Union. Russia has, you see, felt terribly threatened by the antics of the totalitarian American president Nixon, but now unites with him against the wrongly accused Dr. Manhattan. The good doctor, in turn, decides to keep quiet for the sake of the glorious world peace that has descended on the Earth, and blasts off to another galaxy where he can be a god.

Perhaps I should detail all the ways in which the alternative reality here—with Nixon elected to term after term after term and the Soviets invading Afghanistan out of fear of American malfeasance—was not actually intended to be an alternative reality at all, but The Deepest Truth about 1985 from the point of view of *Watchmen*'s creator, Alan Moore. I could—but I'm not going to, because the mere summary of the plot should have revealed to Zack Snyder and Warner Bros. and God knows who else that it was an act of lunacy to make this movie, no matter that it came with a built-in audience of subculture fanatics eager to see how it might be visualized.

Those people did come, but nobody else wanted to. True, there is someone out there nostalgic for a take on the 1980s in which Utopia is realized when the United States makes a complete accommodation with a Soviet regime that, in actuality, was already so decayed by its own evil that it collapsed only six years after *Watchmen* was published. But one ticket sold to Katrina vanden Heuvel does not a box-office bonanza make.

In the end, the cautionary lesson for Hollywood is a simple one: When you make a superhero movie, you should probably consider portraying the superheroes as heroes. That's why people go to superhero movies. They don't go to see the genre twisted and reconceived. They *like* the genre.

And there are a few other lessons as well. Such as: Americans still don't like it when America is portrayed as the villain. And: It's a big mistake to make movies based on the work of Alan Moore. The last movie made from an Alan Moore comic was *V for Vendetta*, a movie with a terrorist hero in which the bombing of the British Parliament is treated as a heroic act of liberation. From siding with the Soviet Union to siding with al Qaeda, Moore demonstrates a disgusting but strangely admirable degree of ideological consistency. What the moneymen at Warner Bros. responsible for distributing both *V for Vendetta* and *Watchmen* show, by contrast, is an inadvertently hilarious brand of moral idiocy.

They also funded *The Dark Knight*, which has earned $1 billion at the box office. *The Dark Knight* is another dark-complected comic-book movie—but this time about what it means to be a hero and the painful sacrifices a true hero is called upon to make to save humanity. The qualities that made *The Dark Knight* a triumph were precisely the same ones that sealed *Watchmen*'s doom. It's kind of obvious when you think about it, but evidently not so obvious when you run a movie studio. ♦

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Camelost

'Not one, but two hagiographies of Edward Kennedy.'

BY PHILIP TERZIAN

It is, perhaps, fitting that, as metropolitan newspapers fade from the scene, the *Boston Globe* should remind us why this is happening by producing not one but two hagiographies of Edward Kennedy. The 77-year-old Kennedy is mortally ill, and certainly entitled to the victory lap he is taking in the political culture; but these two portentous volumes—the dimensions of the second, *Ted Kennedy: Scenes from an Epic Life*, are ideal for coffee tables—tell us considerably more about the *Globe* than about Senator Kennedy.

Last Lion
The Fall and Rise of Ted Kennedy
by the *Boston Globe*
edited by Peter S. Canellos
Simon & Schuster, 480 pp., $28

Ted Kennedy
Scenes from an Epic Life
by the *Boston Globe*
Simon & Schuster, 208 pp., $28

First, there is the "last lion" business. Kennedy has long since grown accustomed to being referred to in the press as the "liberal lion" of the Senate—fair enough—but now that his days in office are numbered, the cliché machine has anointed him the "last lion," the last of a vanishing breed, the last giant to stalk the corridors of the Senate, we shall not see his like again, and so on.

Oh, please. The last time this phrase was employed in a book title, by the late William Manchester, the subject was Winston Churchill. Surely the *Globe* isn't drawing a comparison? More to the point, when Leverett Saltonstall, a far more distinguished representative of Massachusetts, retired from office in 1967 after 30 years' service as governor and senator, and at the same age as Kennedy, the *Globe* failed to serve up a worshipful account of his career. Of course, Saltonstall was a Republican.

Philip Terzian is the literary editor of THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

Moreover, since the dawn of the republic, the Senate has been routinely populated with "last lions," many of whom—Daniel Webster, Henry Clay, John C. Calhoun, John Sherman, Robert La Follette, Henry Cabot Lodge, George Norris, Richard Russell, Hubert Humphrey, et al.—left a far more significant mark on the politics of their times than Edward Kennedy. In statesmanship, as in life, there is a qualitative difference between longevity and distinction, and Edward Kennedy's primary distinction—apart from his *ex officio* fame as a Kennedy—has been his election, and subsequent multiple reelections, by the voters of Massachusetts.

Then there is the fundamental dishonesty of the *Globe*'s approach. *Ted Kennedy* is what used to be called a lip-reader's book—lots of pictures and informative captions, separated by easy-to-read blocks of anodyne text—and certainly slick by the standards of the trade. But *Last Lion* purports to be a serious account of Kennedy's career, and his impact on American history. This would have been easier to accomplish if the *Globe* writers had undertaken an objective assessment of their subject, but that is not the intent here. The point of *Last Lion* is to transform Kennedy's undistinguished tenure in the Senate, and his thwarted ambition in national politics, into a kind of virtual triumph. To be sure, to pull it off would require the narrative skills of a gymnast—to twist the facts to shape the thesis—and the *Globe* writers are only newspapermen.

Edward Kennedy was the youngest of the nine children of Joseph and Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy, and lost in the family shuffle, below the radar of his father's maniacal ambition. He was famously expelled from Harvard for hiring a substitute to take a Spanish exam; but unlike his elder brothers, he held his own on the football team. In 1962, having barely reached the constitutional age to serve, he was elected to his brother John's Senate seat, which had been kept warm during the intervening two years by a faithful family retainer. In the general election he defeated the estimable George Lodge, a victory for the Irish mafia over Brahmin Boston; but it was in the bitter Democratic primary that his rival, Edward McCormack, pronounced the words that would haunt Kennedy ever afterwards: "If your name were Edward Moore instead of Edward Moore Kennedy, your candidacy would be a farce."

The great fulcrum of Kennedy's career, of course, is Chappaquiddick. Before 1969 he was a plausible Democratic aspirant for the presidency, and was climbing the greasy pole of Senate influence. After 1969 he was demoted in the Senate hierarchy by, of all people, Robert Byrd; and his 1980 campaign against a sitting Democratic president remains a classic in the annals of political egotism and self-destruction.

Here is where the *Globe*'s ingenuity is put to the test. Instead of recognizing that Kennedy's political future perished with Mary Jo Kopechne, and that's that, *Last Lion* argues that the death of his presidential ambitions "liberated" Kennedy to dominate the Senate—and by inference, his times.

This is complete nonsense. Kennedy's rear-guard warfare against a resurgent conservatism in the 1980s and '90s—most notably his personal assault on Judge Robert Bork—was purely reactionary. There is no major legislation, certainly nothing resembling a political philosophy, associated with Kennedy's name. And for all his passion in repeating Theodore Sorensen's sonorous prose, his most famous pronouncement is his incoherent response to Roger Mudd's innocuous question, "Why do you want to be president?" ♦

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Two people were hospitalized, four others injured, and three arrested after a melee in downtown Manhattan on Saturday morning among the hundreds waiting in line to audition for the newest season of "America's Next Top Model."

—News item, March 16, 2009

March 16, 2009

'Top Model' Contestants Jailed, Hospitalized After Manhattan Street Riot over Life Savers

By Dexter Arbuthnot
Washington Post Staff Writer

NEW YORK — The Manhattan District Attorney's office is contemplating criminal charges against officials of the Wrigley Company, manufacturers of Life Savers, after several pieces of the circular, multi-colored candy with the hole in the middle were dropped on a midtown sidewalk where contestants for "America's Next Top Model," a popular reality television program on the CW Network, were standing in line.

According to police, at around noon yesterday, an unspecified number of Life Savers were deliberately strewn onto the pavement, just minutes after the fashionably dressed contestants had assembled in line, prompting several to break ranks and dive for the popular confection. Within seconds, other potential "top models" were seen running up and down the pavement, or crawling around on hands and knees, frantically searching for Life Savers, pushing and shoving fellow contestants. Several were injured in the crush, and three models dressed in identical Karl Lagerfeld outfits were arrested after fighting over possession of one red Life Saver fragment, which was seized as evidence.

"It was, like, total panic," said aspiring spokesmodel LaTrina Jackson, 19, of Brooklyn, who was injured but not hospitalized. "Girls were screaming, crying, scratching—everything." One program official, who declined to be identified, complained that "whoever did this knew exactly what they were doing. For some of these young ladies one Life Saver is the equivalent of two days' nourishment. This was like throwing flesh into a tank of hungry sharks."

While acknowledging that police did not know who might have tossed the Life Savers onto the pavement, or whether they were dropped by accident, Manhattan District Attorney Robert Morgenthau's office issued a statement reiterating the social responsibility of junk food manufacturers.

"This was nothing but a body-image hate crime," said Morgenthau, who has

See Investigation, *A5, Col.1*

Jonathan McIntosh

New York City riot police prepare to quell a melee among 'America's Top Model' hopefuls.

Congress Demands AIG Execs Turn Over Bonuses, First-born

the weekly Standard
March 30, 2009

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